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*Sycamore Shores*

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# *Sycamore Shores*

By

CLARK B. FIRESTONE

*Author of "The Coasts of Illusion"*

*"There was behinde the Plane tree a  
pleasant running water."*

—THE GOLDEN ASSE



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SYCAMORE SHORES

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## *Preface*

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THE WAYS OF RIVERS ARE COMPELLING, THE MEETING OF their waters an exciting thing. They draw the boundaries of countries, judge between commonwealths, give and take away. Though they dwindle in every drought, they return with every rain, in an hour replenishing themselves, in a day knocking at the gates of frightened cities. Whether they carry men and goods or flow through lands empty of inhabitant, whether they are used or neglected, is naught to them. They have work of their own to do.

Behind the wall of the Appalachians, the life of the Old West moved along rivers when there were no roads save buffalo streets, Indian trails, and the blazed paths of the pioneer. Because travel on land was arduous going either afoot or on horseback, and because there could be no wheeled traffic, people took to the rivers, and soon the backwoodsmen were known on the seaboard, not as the Folk of the Wilderness, but as the Men of the Western Waters.

A light canoe could carry a considerable burden, and in a single day cover a distance that was a week's journey overland. Only in high water might there be traffic with the outside world. In the spring and autumn freshets,

flatboats which held even more than the railroad freight cars that were to replace them made their way down creeks unknown to modern geography. Steamboats plied on rivers the names of which are no longer heard save when they are in flood.

Beside these waterways savage cultures flourished and faded, and a new civilization came into being. The procession of time that moved along them shows mound builder, Indian, fur trader, hunter, voyageur, priest, soldier, settler, hardy generations of boatmen and steamboatmen, children of commerce, the folk of fashion. Their banks were the scene of obscure but deadly battles among four races, of fratricidal conflict in the War of States.

They are occupied now by a people scarcely conscious of their inheritance, yet whose lives have been shaped by these memories, and by running water. Before there were counties or even states, there was a Muskingum country, a Scioto country, a Licking country, a Wabash country, and other areas that by common acceptance were true provinces of the woods. The dim outlines of these grand divisions of yesterday show through the political boundaries of modern maps as a pagan text of Greece shows through the pious scrawl of monks on a palimpsest.

The first store in the Old West was a flatboat, the first theater a showboat, the first rowdy hero a keelboatman; and now its rivers are the last wilderness. Behind the screen of willows is a half-forgotten world with laws of its own, a realm where shantyboat folk set their lines, and log rafts move downstream, and drift sweeps by on its way to the sea, and sometimes a lonely packet passes, and the heron drowns on a dead sycamore.

From time to time the writer has parted a green cur-

tain and entered this world. There he has traveled the Ohio and its tributaries and some reaches of the Mississippi. It has been his pleasure to scan both new texts and old on the flowing scroll of their waters.

C. B. F.

Cincinnati, 1936



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## *I. Embarkation*

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THE RIVER WAS RUNNING DRIFTWOOD AGAIN AFTER A season of low water. A year's accumulation of blasted branches, dead trees, fence rails, and miscellaneous flotsam was on its long journey to the Gulf. These navies of things aloof, neglected, and rejected had come out of brooks, branch water, creeks, swift mountain tributaries, and from the banks of the Ohio itself, to join nature's procession into oblivion. Which meant that a great waterway was resuming its sovereignty. A railroad may become two streaks of rust and a right of way, a highway may go bad, a canal fill up with bulrushes and bullfrogs, a forest get into history as Fallen Timbers, a mining city fade into a ghost town. But rivers are eternal things.

All my days I had heard the voice of one river calling—from its creeks where I swam and fished as a boy; from narratives of great things done beside its fountains; from the tales of fortunate wanderers who had gone to far places upon it, and from the compelling and quieting song of rains that were its ministers. The time came at last to answer a summons. I was setting forth on the Ohio to learn such of its secrets as I might divine or it im-

part, to go up and down its tributaries, to glimpse if may be its neighbor waters. This was the beginning of a quest.

One American in every eight lives in the Ohio valley. It nurtured ten presidents of the nation's thirty-two. But my concern was with matters that lay back and beyond. A river flows into the past and carries you with it into some forgetfulness of present things. The valley of my vision was framed by brooding Southern mountains, and by swamps that traced a vague watershed for the inland seas. From boundary to boundary rolled the woods and plains. There were great salt springs where mastodon, buffalo, and elk drank the healing waters, and from spring to spring ran their roads. Under the earth were other roads, which ran for thousands of miles, widening at times into marble halls.

A dim civilization flourished and faded in the valley, and left it a land of graves. There the most warlike of red races wrote a wild epic of resistance before they turned their faces to the setting sun. There a new type of man, the pioneer of the woods, was born, and schooled for vanguard tasks in the march to the Pacific. There slavery showed its fairest side—the slavery of song and story—only to disappear in the grimmest battles of the Civil War.

All of this was in the river's voice, together with matters of less moment, yet of appeal. The Ohio flowed into the past, and I went with it.

It was still raining when I embarked at Steubenville, but the leaden skies and turbid waters were at least the portent of a swift and vital journey. Pittsburgh, where the Allegheny and the Monongahela merge, was seventy

miles behind; Cincinnati was three days distant and four hundred miles ahead. About me was my own country. These river towns with their potteries, brickyards, coal chutes, blast furnaces, steel mills, tin mills, glass works, I knew them well, for had I not canvassed them once as candidate for office? I had handed out cards at daybreak before mine mouths and the gates of clanging mills; at midday, to jesting easy-mannered craftsmen at the potters' wheels; at midnight, where deft hand workers were blowing bottles from molten glass. Then I had gone up through long, narrow glens, in which were villages of incurious Slavic miners, and onto a tableland of thrifty farmsteads mainly occupied by Convinced Drys of Scotch-Irish or Quaker origin, with here and there the stading of a descendant, not quite so dry, of the Pennsylvania Dutch. I learned to tell the Slavs and migratory West Virginians—"snake-eaters," these called themselves—at a glance, and wasted no cards on them, for the latter did not vote in Ohio and the former did not vote at all. From the size of a farmer's barn—the Pennsylvania Dutchman's was always bigger than his house—I could usually infer whether he was dry or wet.

Downstream, the Ohio flows through green silences, but this was part of the empire of steel. The water front along which we were moving smoked and flamed with its energies, until one all but forgot the deep historical backgrounds of the river. Upon it the main continental routes of elder America—those of Washington, Braddock, Forbes, and Boone—all converged. By the Ohio and by Cumberland Gap, the Old West was settled. Five types of floating craft tell the tale: the canoe of Indians, trappers, and French missionaries and explorers; the flat-boat, a Kentucky "broadhorn" forty feet or more in



length and twelve feet wide, with a roof over at least half the deck, for fifty years cargo carrier and emigrant ark; the keelboat of trimmer lines, which could get upstream; the steamboat from 1811 on, a "palace," Mark Twain says, the magnificence of which was typified by chandeliers "each an April shower of glittering glass drops"; and lastly, the steel barge in whole flotillas, pushed rather than pulled by small powerful craft, the so-called towboats. Behind this brief array is the rich story of American travel.

The river flows through America's widest-read novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and its murmur is in the plaintive songs of Foster. "The time is not distant," said Timothy Flint at the beginning of another century, "when the traveled citizen of the other side of the mountains will not be willing to admit that he has not taken an autumnal or vernal trip of pleasure, or observation, from Pittsburgh to New Orleans." Generations of Americans who left no travel record, but who were statesmen, men of affairs, and gentlefolk reared in the tradition of sidewhiskers and crinoline, regarded a steamboat ride on the Ohio, if possible extended down the Mississippi to the capital of fashion and frivolity at New Orleans, as something enjoyable and memorable.

So is the Ohio trip today. Because it flows west as well as south; because it is the boundary between North and South; because coal and iron ore and timber are at its headwaters or the headwaters of its affluents and can be floated downstream, this is the most significant of all American rivers. Among the larger ones it is the fairest to the eye. "The most beautiful river on earth," Jefferson called it. With its full tide, sometimes a mile wide, tawny green, winding around bold headlands and through

lush bottom lands in a course of nearly a thousand miles, it moves out of the past toward destinies undisclosed.

Although it bears a Northern name, this is a Southern river. It belonged to Virginia, and when the Old Dominion ceded to the nation the conquests of George Rogers Clark in the Northwest Territory, control of the Ohio was retained as far as low-water mark on the right bank. With the formation of new states, control passed to West Virginia and Kentucky. The two states police the river and lay down terms under which fish may be taken from it. Upon it, as upon all its navigable tributaries, is the spell of the South. Most of the showboats that entertain the waterside towns with the plays of generations ago seem to be Kentucky owned. The steamboats set a Southern table, and black cooks, waiters, stewardesses, and roustabouts serve them. In the soft speech used upon them, in their sauntering ways, in the very glamour as of yesterday that surrounds their comings and goings, the Old South asserts itself.

Such was the stern-wheeler on which I was descending the Ohio, and such the journey. A former cotton boat on the Mississippi, the *General Wood* was a companion boat of the *Betsy Ann*, which surrendered its gilded antlers to the *Chris Greene* after a gallant race in which both boats made some ten miles an hour! It was also true descendant of generations of packets that had plied the rivers in their heyday, its smokestacks side by side, its long cabin embellished with gilt acorns and florid scroll-saw work, with walls and doors gay with paintings, and looking, said Captain Frederick Way in his vivacious *Log of the Betsy Ann*, like "a dormitory hallway except when the lights were lit, and then it became Broadway's only rival."

On the hurricane deck was the texas, which had rooms

for crew as well as passengers, and midway above it the pilothouse. Cabin and staterooms were on the boiler deck beneath. The lower deck carried cargo and about a score of roustabouts who lounged on bags and bales. At meal-time small tables were attached to the walls of the cabin; these were cleared away afterward for dancing.

By gangplank when there was a wharfboat and a town, or by landing stages along the countryside, we made contact with shore and put off or took on passengers and commodities. Though a routine item of inland transportation, the wharfboat is something you will not find upon New York's North and East rivers, nor perhaps anywhere along salt water. The old boat mills that were anchored in the Ohio and run by its current may have provided the pattern. It is at once a floating dock, a freight house, a ticket office, a shelter for roustabouts. The voluminous depths carry the blended scents of oranges, apples, hams, grains, and groceries, and perhaps hogs and sheep. Drawing little water, moored by chains and cables that allow it to rise and fall with the stream, it is a sort of pontoon bridge between shore and channel. It may suggest a certain quality of improvisation, a hit-or-miss method of loading and unloading, but commerce by packet could not move without it.

Always passengers crowded the rails to watch the Negroes carry ashore the sacks of cattle feed, kegs of butter, crates of fruit, baskets of greenstuff, barrels of groceries, boxes of malt extract, carboys of chemicals, casks of oil, cans of paint, bags of cement, bundles of laths, bridge and housebuilding materials. It is a pleasant thing to see tasks discharged willingly, easily, rhythmically, and so the roustabouts performed them. Some of the burdens borne on head and shoulders weighed two hundred pounds or more;

yet the men moved along at a shuffling pace, with sallies of mellow badinage. When the boat coaled up from barges, they carried their burdens in handbarrows.

River blacks have some contempt for railroad blacks who wheel things around. Circumstances make them more gregarious and sociable beings. Sometimes they engage in discussions which may be referred to the white officers for adjudication. Who was President? The lower deck agreed that it was Teddy Roosevelt, one man contending, however, that "Cooley" held this post. Loud, long, and triumphant was his laughter when the purser said that Calvin Coolidge was the man.

From time to time we saw the habitation of the river white—a shantyboat, moored below a point or near a town. Its owner pays no rent, and supports his family by fishing and doing odd jobs ashore, sometimes, as local rumor has it, by robbing kitchen gardens and hen roosts; he may have his own patch of sweet corn and potatoes in the adjacent bottoms. His demesne is the entire length of the Ohio and Mississippi. A nomadic strain is in him, the blood of boisterous rivermen in the days of the flatboats. The traffic in fish which he carries on with the steamboat men and townsfolk relates him to the peddlers who once worked the river. His restlessness and easy-going shiftlessness are of pioneer origin, the sort of man who ran away from civilization when its pattern became too complicated for him.

There is sentiment in steamboating, and the packets maintain a whimsical relationship with the river country. They are supposed to whistle when they approach a lock or drawbridge or landing, and when they pass other craft. Once we whistled without apparent reason. "Just cheering up an aunt," the pilot explained. "She's stopping

at a farm a mile or so back from shore." There is a story of a letter sent to a steamboat office by a blind fiddler in a remote Kentucky valley. His violin was out of tune. Would the boat's calliope kindly sound a G extra loud and clear as it rounded a certain point?

Retired pilots, lonely widows, friends of the river—packets have been known to salute them all. There are persons with whom the boats are a passion. They watch them pass to see if they are heavily or lightly loaded; year after year they keep alive tradition by going on the Mardi Gras excursions to New Orleans. Among them are railroad presidents, congressmen, postmasters, lawyers, bankers, hotelkeepers.

When Mark Twain was a pilot, as he records in his *Life on the Mississippi*, there was "neither light nor buoy to be found anywhere in all this three or four thousand miles of villainous river," a statement that included the Ohio. Nowadays there are both. Pilots steer by the government lights, which are lanterns set upon white tripods, and sometimes in trees, on one bank or the other, with white Greek crosses behind them for day-marks. By night in the dark pilothouse the man at the wheel holds the jackstaff on one of these lights, a clump of trees, or the top of a hill; he keeps away from drift, for a real log—in packet parlance a "hull inspector"—may be troublesome. Sometimes railroad engineers dim their headlights when a steamboat is passing; if touring cars on a river road neglect this courtesy, the searchlight, of eight thousand candlepower, turned full upon them, is a persuasive reminder.

Keeping the government lights provides a small, assured income to farmers along the river. They are paid from six to sixteen dollars a month for each light, and

their wives and children do the work. Twice a year the tender *Greenbriar* brings them oil, globes, and wicks, and there is an accounting on broken glass and wick stubs. With the lights numbered up to six hundred, it is possible for pilots to persuade the credulous that the white crosses mark the graves of the dead and that the numbers upon them record their weight.

On the river itself, as we slid down a succession of freshes, the fugitive panorama of traffic unfolded—government maneuver boats, dredges, snaggers, sand-suckers; the *Betsy Ann* toiling upstream; the *Tom Greene*, inbound from the ports of the Kanawha; the showboat *White Lily* aglow with lights for a night performance; Pittsburgh steel moving toward New Orleans and the coast cities of Latin America; huckster steamboats running from Pittsburgh to Wheeling and to Marietta; a floating village of scows where the Little Sandy comes in; an oil-burning towboat, a gasoline boat pushing empties; the shuttle paths of stoutly built ferryboats with red hulls and white uppers; coal, iron, sand, and gravel barges driven by towboats; speed boats, fishing boats, canoes, canoe havens; small rafts lying just inside the mouths of small rivers; shantyboats lying inside the mouths of small, drowned creeks. Not the least interesting was the *Senator Cordill*, a steamboat which ran between Pittsburgh and Charleston on the Big Kanawha, scurried back and forth from shore to shore, carried no cargo but chickens and eggs, and was reputed to take note of every barnyard cackle. The mate named it a hen boat. If you believe towboat folk, all packets are calf boats.

Out of the pageant of river craft that the American story arrays, only three items were missing. There were no ships, though once Ohio sent them to the outer seas.

Gone were the floating stores, though these did the first merchandising in the Old West. And gone were the love boats of Civil War days, manned by women, with their barrooms, dancing halls, dining rooms, kitchens, and staterooms, which did well at the towns when courts, political conventions, or church meetings were in session.

Another and a great thing in the history of river traffic—the coal trade—has changed from long haul to short. Pittsburgh coal no longer descends the Ohio and Mississippi to the far South; it is needed at home. The barges that I saw were bringing coal from the Kanawha and Big Sandy areas to Cincinnati and way points; western Kentucky supplies the Louisville region; New Orleans and other towns on the lower Mississippi get fuel from Alabama. Time was when fleets of towboats and barges a hundred miles long went down the Ohio on “coal-boat water” in squadrons from Pittsburgh harbor.

There are a few other things to be said about the Ohio, which I picked up on the trip or learned afterward: eighty-two ferries serve it, and in the automobile age at fifty cents the car some of them do an incredible business. Hence the multiplication of bridges, which number fifty-six. Steamboats have hinged smokestacks to pass under bridges in high water. At such times the dams lower their wickets, creating an open river up and down which the boats go without entering the lock chambers. Floods come in February and March, when the Ohio has been known to rise twelve feet in a night. Boats are required to slow down in passing an inundated dwelling. The most disastrous day in the river's record was in February, 1918, when it froze over nearly from end to end, and ice gorges wrecked steamboats all the way down to Cairo. The mouths of tributaries offer fairly safe

havens; swift water in the main river dams them back into long, stationary pools. There is a tradition that the Ohio flows fastest at night. The prevailing southwest wind is called the trade wind. On the Mississippi a levee is an embankment beside the river to prevent overflow; on the Ohio it is a paved landing place, usually a cobbled slope.

Two of the streams whose waters feed the Ohio are known as Big Bull Creek and Little Bull Creek. Wherever a tributary has a smaller neighbor—a bull and a calf, so to speak—it is the singular custom of the Ohio valley to give them the same surname and distinguish them by calling one Big and the other Little. So, in the candid frontier times, the settlements were full of Big Johns and Little Johns, Clean Johns and Dirty Johns. Was the tradition carried over to streams, or did people run out of names for them, or were they adapting some misunderstood and now-forgotten Indian law of nomenclature? Anyway, the Ohio boasts among its tribute-bearers Big Rusty Gut, Little Rusty Gut, Big and Little Paddy Run, Big and Little Snag Creek, Big and Little Forked Creek, Big and Little Pigeon Creek, Big and Little Turtle Creek, Big and Little Indian Creek, Big and Little Squaw Creek, Big and Little Gunpowder Creek, Big and Little Grave Creek, and about a hundred others, paired off and labeled in the same thrifty fashion.

Larger affluents carry some echo of Indian music. A few streams, like Moon Hollow Run and Lonesome Hollow Creek, are named with a rude sense of poetry. Others, like Forty Winks, Gitaway Creek, Fish Gut, Polecat Run, Mosquito Creek, Tanyard Run, Flatfoot Creek, Whiskey Run, Stillhouse River, and Skull Run, reflect the hard realism of the frontier time. The Ohio



itself has items of intriguing names, among them Cache Island, Poker Point, Dutch Bend Light, Plow Handle Point, Bee Slough, Scuffletown Bar, Tobacco Bend, Tradewater Bar, Yeast Landing.

Some of the streams I knew, and their demure exits into the Ohio carried me back to adventures in hill places where their water moved faster. There, within the bends of Red River, I had found the forgotten Land of Calaboose; a skyline natural bridge that might have been a highway of the old gods, and on the journey thither a brook that leaped thirty feet over a laurel-shadowed ledge and yet was a county road while it did so. On Kinniconick, a landlord went away and left me in charge overnight with orders to put all moneys had from travelers on the kitchen table. Farther back in the hills, I followed a public right of way through a private house. I saw droves of mountain steers coming down the Cattle Trail after weeks on the road. On the Kentucky downs I had known a Roman interval in a great wooden horse-theater, where thousands of spectators sat in boxes about an arena alive with spirited beasts.

The Ohio creeks brought down other memories: the Hanging Rock Iron Country along Raccoon Creek, and the ruins there of scores of charcoal furnaces whence came the metal for the Swamp Angel, most noted of Civil War cannon; above Cattail Creek, a prehistoric shrine with footprints that, were they really such and not the work of some savage Rodin, would trample out the accepted history of the globe; on Brush Creek, the Serpent Mound, with distended jaws and something between them, the serpent of Eden and the apple thereof if you believe a curious antiquary; along other waterways a Vale of Tempe where people set their clocks by the

first notes of the whippoorwill, Tranquillity which lies as it should between covered bridges, Felicity—as you would expect—upon a byroad.

Wherever a stream of any size enters the Ohio there is a town on its flood plain, and often the town has made some contribution to the continental story. In our down-river trip America passed in review. Opposite the mouth of Yellow Creek, Logan's family was massacred. Edwin M. Stanton, Lincoln's war secretary, came from Steubenville. At Mingo Bottom was once a Seneca town where Washington held a powwow. At Moundsville is the Big Grave of an extinct race. To the home of a romantic Irishman and his lovely wife on Blennerhassett Island in 1805 came one Aaron Burr with a dream—disastrous to all—of empire in the Southwest. The mouth of Scioto, where Portsmouth stands, was a center of the fur trade. Maysville was the port of entry through which much of Bluegrass Kentucky was settled. Ripley was a noted station on the Underground Railroad. William Henry Harrison lived at North Bend, Grant was born at the lower Point Pleasant, Taft in Cincinnati.

Buffington Island was the scene of the best war story I know of. There, in July, 1863, John Morgan's Confederate raiders were cornered between Union gunboats and the pursuing cavalry. After a sharp fight, most of them surrendered. The water was green and clear. Captors and captives had been riding across two states through perpetual dust. They looked wistfully at the river and then into each other's eyes. In another moment they had shucked their clothes, and the river was filled with shouting boys!

Only waterside Cincinnati belongs in this narrative. A century ago a score of steamboats might leave it in a

single day, for such unexpected ports as Little Rock, the Falls of St. Anthony, the Mouth of the Ohio, the Wabash, Rising Sun, Guyandot, St. Peters. Even when I made my trip it was the main packet port in the country, with boats upstream to Pittsburgh and to the Kanawha and downstream to Louisville, and with a barge line which took cargoes to New Orleans in seven days and brought other cargoes back in fourteen.

A coterie of artists from California whose adventures are recorded in Abdy's *On the Ohio* found the levee interesting, "a color-poem of soft greys," and their annalist declared that "Cincinnati itself is quite paintable."

Charles Dickens, who a century before made the same trip that I did, is equally gracious. "I was quite charmed with the appearance of the town," he declares.

My own abiding picture of the river at Cincinnati is not as I saw it at the end of this journey but at another time when it was in flood. A near neighbor and a tall it seemed to be. On the raised skyline there were smokestacks, invisible before, and I thought of how the steamboats stood out of the Mississippi at New Orleans. The Ohio was crowding up its banks to meet the city, claiming the levee for its own. Where the long, paved slopes should have been was La Belle Rivière—a coffee-colored dame with weeds in her hair, drift for her neckyoke, and for her skirts floating tree trunks and treetops. Broad-hipped and loose-limbed and sociable in a termagant way was she—if not the Father of Waters at least their Great-aunt; and her nieces upstream, the Big and Little Beaver, the Kanawha, the Big Sandy, the Muskingum, and the Scioto, all had set the old lady a bad example.

Kentucky never looked so near. Flood water had erased the no-man's land on both sides of the river. By

crossing in either direction I felt that I would come at once to people's doorsteps instead of to some back gate at the foot of a long garden. The Ohio had overplayed its hand. It had not only wiped out a state boundary line, but had even wiped out itself. This was no river valley. It was just a wide, submerged street. Those red brick houses on the farther shore were merely buildings on the other side of the way. When the waters had receded, I felt, I would behold phantom cars going back and forth in a deeply rutted thoroughfare which somehow I had forgotten about.

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## *II. The Beautiful River*

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MEANDER IS ONE OF THE PLEASANT WORDS OF THE language. That is why I like the Ohio, for that is what it does; and doubtless that is why the wandering French, who knew most of the streams of North America, gave it first place among them and the name of the Beautiful River. All of which George Washington, descending the stream in 1770, put into the implications of a single diary sentence: "The Ohio, in general, is remarkably crooked."

In those days, or a little later when the flatboats began to move down, a dry spell bared the mud and shingle of the shore and brought sand bars to the surface and a halt to navigation. Now it is a marching waterway from one green edge to the other; it is willow-fringed from source to mouth, as then it was not, and a vigorous second growth, clothing its framework of hills, mimics the primeval forest, and does it very well. Besides, there are cities along it with ancient levees, cavernous wharfboats, and excursion craft from which calliopes proclaim the invitation of the valley; and there are excellent old towns, half hidden among the elms, with fields of tall corn between them and the water. In the time of the French these were not.

Swinging from headland to headland, and in and out of the past, the river whose upper course I had traveled bade me go farther. When occasion offered I went downstream for a three days' journey, taking the boat to Louisville on a Friday afternoon, spending Saturday in a notable nook of inland Kentucky, and coming upstream by daylight on Sunday. My packet was the *Cincinnati*, since become an excursion boat on the Mississippi.

Electric lights and baths excepted, I was back in the Fabulous Forties. Everything else was very much as it had been in the days when Frances Trollope, riding upstream, registered a sense of outrage at the gambling and gourmandizing of men passengers and their accurate target practice with cuspidors, and in the next breath declared that the Kentuckians who worked their passage on the main deck were handsome as demigods.

When we left *Cincinnati* on an August afternoon the calliope on a Coney Island boat played us a farewell tune. There followed the familiar panorama of *Cincinnati* harbor—the pictured water front that is Covington; on the right bank the barge harbor with its floating machine shops, its ducklike towboat, its fleet of craft from the lower Mississippi, and the cluster of shantyboats beyond them; tipples unloading coal from West Virginia; riverside camps with their whitewashed willow trunks; houseboats from which supper smoke was already ascending; canoes that paddled out to take our swells, and, farther along, small bare boys who ducked modestly as we passed. Soon I made, or seemed to make, a discovery which escaped Audubon, who wrote much about the river and more about birds. All the birds of Ohio, or at any rate all in the river counties, or at any rate all that I could see, fly over to Kentucky roosts at night.

At Louisville, with all of Saturday at my disposal I had choice of two trips. One was westward into Indiana to French Lick, a worldly resort where for generations the Middle West had taken the waters, disported itself, and made Democratic war-medicine. What Bottom would have called an "exposition" of piety may have been upon me, for with others I went southward into Catholic Kentucky, which is also the Lincoln home country, a land of steepled churches, convents and abbeys, and the American seat of the ancient order of the Dominicans. At Bardstown we visited the protocathedral with its noble paintings and its memories of a king of France, and Federal Hall with its legend of Stephen Collins Foster and "My Old Kentucky Home." Then we drove to the Abbey of Gethsemane, founded by the French in 1848, where Trappist monks live and labor under a vow of perpetual silence. While the men explored their gardens, chapels, and cloisters, the women of the party waited outside in such secular serenity as they could muster.

This was but a land episode in a water journey. Down the river and back, the passage had some quality of aquatic adventure. An adventure means people, and save those on shipboard, you do not meet them on an ocean voyage until it is ended. The sea is pretty much of a blank. You content yourself, as best you may, with spouting whales and dolphin backs, and the smoke of other boats along the skyline, until almost you wish that a tolerant pirate crew would board you. On the river we were meeting people every little while, stopping at towns to put off and take on passengers and cargo, visiting back and forth between the Kentucky and Indiana shores. The daily halt of the big packets is as much an

event in the river towns as I found the coming of a train was in Russian villages when I traveled there in the time of the Czars.

Scores of cars were drawn up on each levee, or on the road that wound down from the town's Front Street—there is always a Front Street—and throngs of citizens were waiting on land or on the wharfboat, where there was a wharfboat, if only to play a spectator part in the drama of travel. Meanwhile roustabouts rolled or carried casks, kegs, and boxes ashore, and brought on potatoes, tomatoes, crates of cockerels, baskets of eggs, and other commodities of village origin. At two Kentucky hamlets on the way upstream we shipped a parcel of calves, which came sliding unwillingly aboard, a dusky attendant fore and aft urging them into pens on the lower deck.

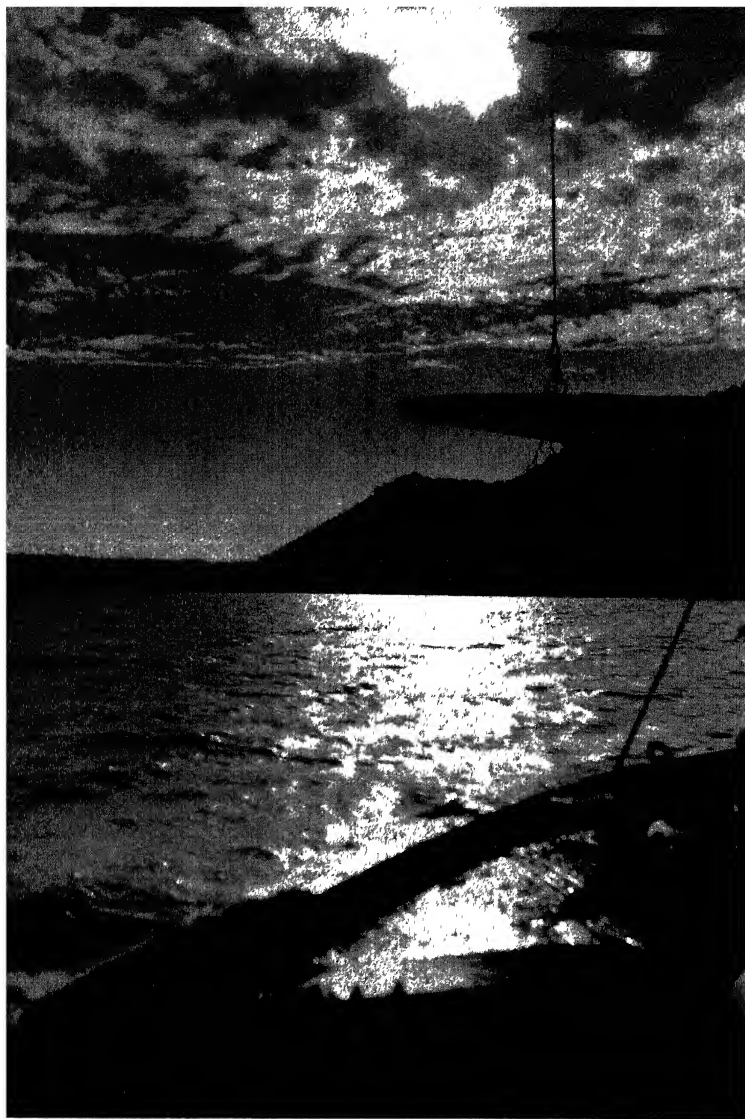
These incidents of embarkation and disembarkation were strung along such towns as Lawrenceburg, Aurora, Rising Sun, Warsaw, Vevay, and Carrollton, all of which you will find on the map. We stopped at other places with names unknown to fame, some, indeed, with no names at all—at the foot of a lonely road, on the edge of a cornfield, under a bank behind which a country churchbell was clanking. In addition to big cities and small, the river boats serve hamlets and farms far from the railroad and do not disdain the smallest consignment of produce or the wanderlust of a solitary farm hand; like as not, if you swing a lantern in a meadow they will come in to shore—and they can come in to shore almost anywhere—lower the landing stage into a willow clump, and take you aboard. This minute, friendly, personal service is one of the quaintest features of American river travel.



Without stopping, we passed two Kentucky hamlets, diminutive but not unknown to fame. On his wife's insistence, an Indiana governor drove clear across the commonwealth for a look at the droll settlement of Rabbit Hash, whereof a valley rhymist sang "Two stores the village now includes." The obscure hamlet of Big Bone, situated in a vast graveyard of mastodons and other extinct animals not far from the river, provoked a critical passage from De Quincey and was once better known abroad than any other settlement in the Old West.

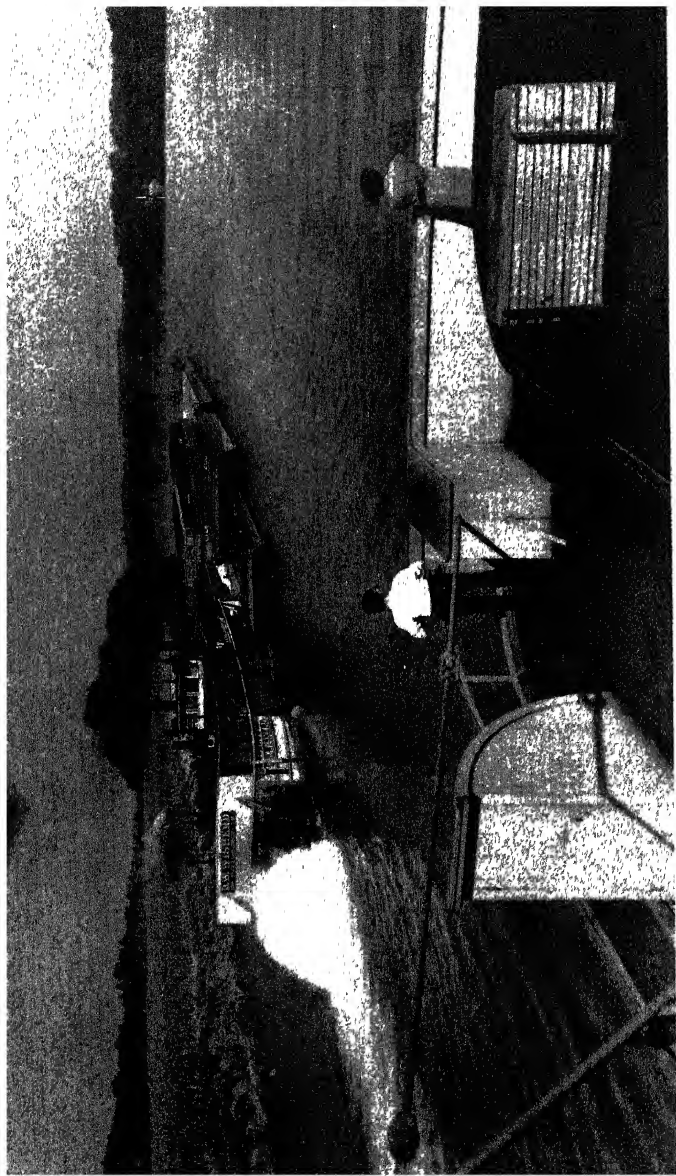
Going around the dams was a spectacle which always brought passengers on deck. The device by which a boat enters a lock chamber and achieves a higher or a lower water level is the simplest known to man—a mere matter of filling or decanting, like pouring wine from a jar into a flagon and back again—but all the canal transportation of the world is based upon it. Giving a warning blast, we moved slowly into a cement corridor. The roar of the dam was on one side, and on the other was a wide stone plaza and paved slope, with neat government houses in a setting of trees and turf beyond. After night-fall there were red and green signal lights, and lanterns moved along the lock walls. Gates were closed, the water boiled in or drained out, and we steamed forth again into the channel.

The river itself holds the traveler more than anything that man has builded upon it, because it is a moving parable of life. Its vistas close in behind you, and you can never see far ahead, nor guess what is beyond the next turn. Always it is turning; seldom is there a stretch of more than three or four miles in sight at one time. Emerging from one blue promontory, the flood disappears behind another. Hills dark with foliage or green



*Paul Brul*

The rising sun makes a golden path for the gay  
passage of a river packet.



Paul Briol

The broad highway of olden days—the river—still is the best road to market. The towboat *D. W. Wisher*, pushing a string of loaded barges on the Ohio.

Through fertile valleys, past quiet towns, through thriving manufacturing centers, the river packet plies its majestic way today as it did before the Civil War.

Paul Brice



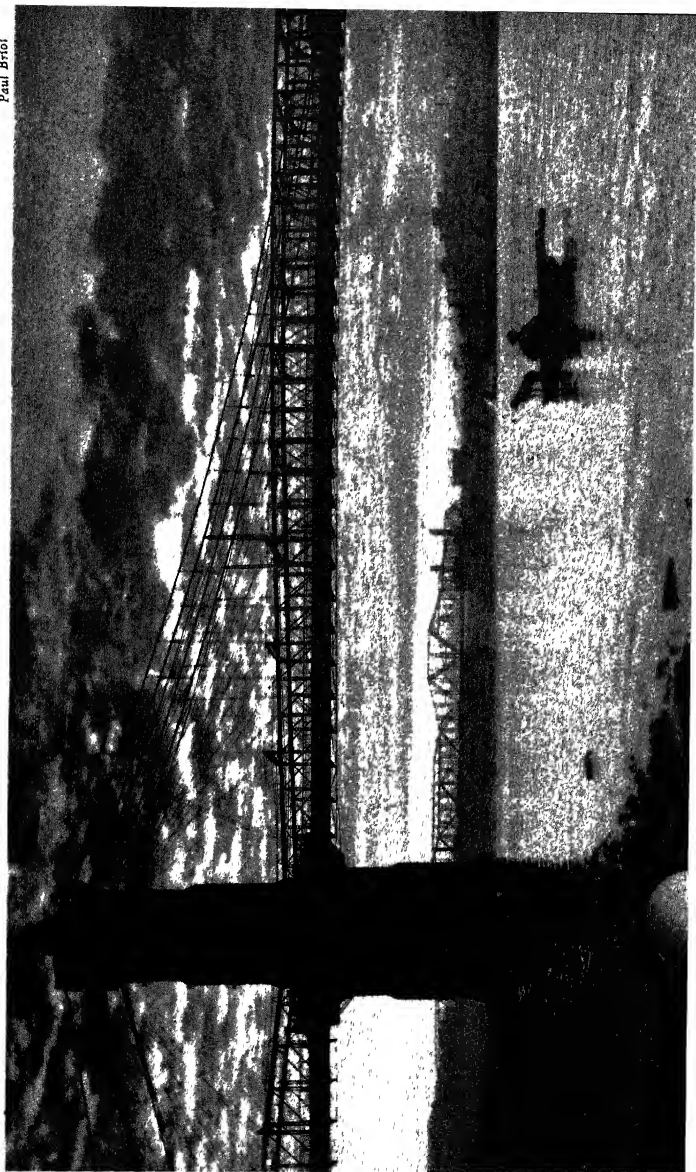


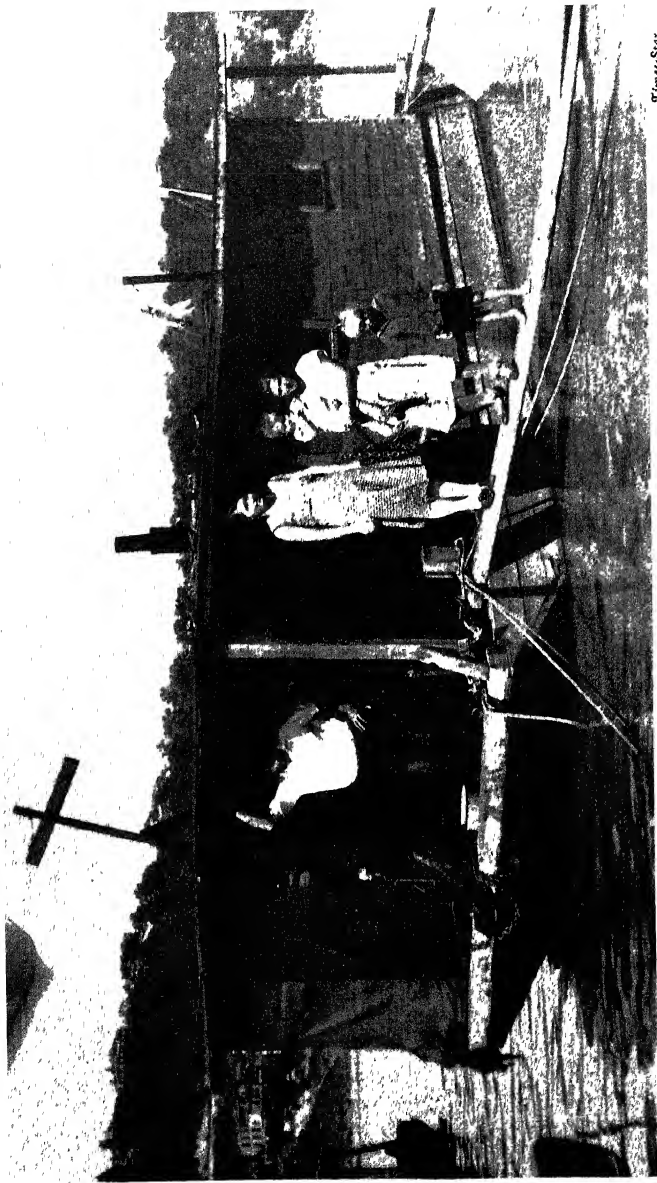
*Paul Briol.*

As much a king of his realm as the captain of any ocean-going ship, the skipper of a river packet has this advantage—that he can wave from the pilot-house window in passing at his

Over the rivers the cities' bridges weave a fantastic pattern—modern fly-lofts above a stage as old as time.

Paul Briol



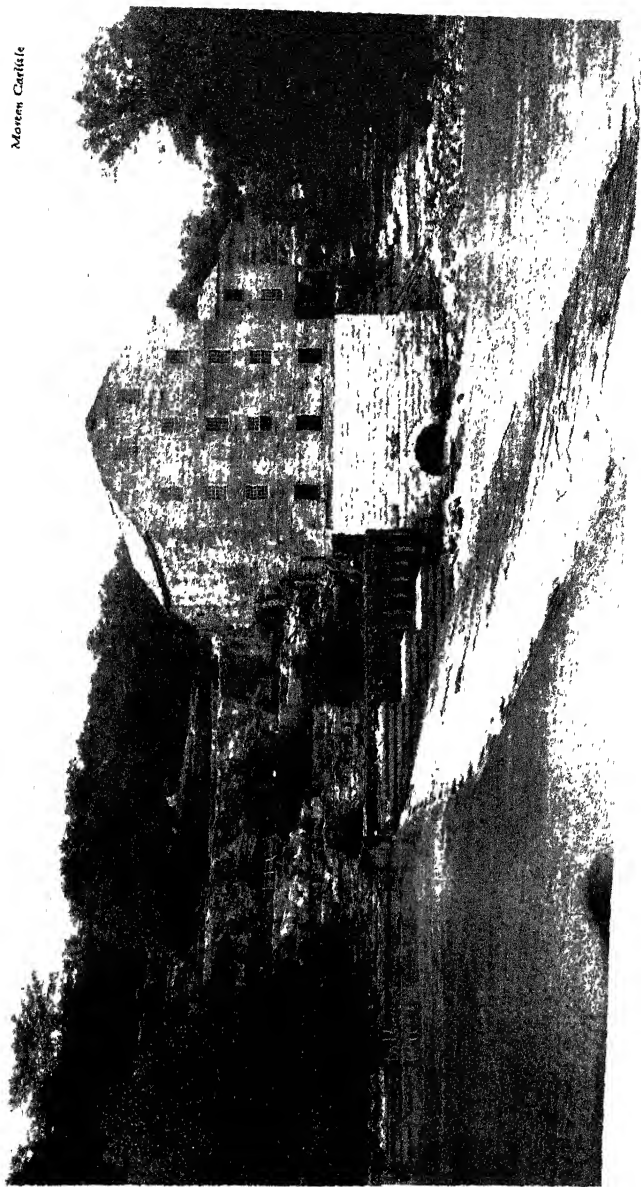


Times-Star

When they're not listening to a program, these shanty-boaters use the radio antennæ for a clothesline. Dams and locks and house-boat license laws have diminished the number of these picturesque craft, but will probably never eliminate them. They still furnish year-round homes for hundreds of families.

For generations, this old mill has been grinding out its product by using the leashed power of the Barren River. Such dams as these have been the bane of the shanty-boater and the friend of the miller since the white man first settled along the inland streams.

Moreen Carlisle







Paul Brul

Cincinnati, Ohio—industrial center, packet port, show-boat town—giant offspring of the river.

with pasture land frame the valley through which it flows. Creeks that are shadowed by sycamores come slowly in. Farmhouses, barns, silos, hayricks, woods, pasture and plowland, the items in the view are simple enough, but the winding Ohio shifts them and no pictures are repeated. Everywhere, behind the river's willow hangings, are fields of maize, for this is the province of corn.

Here and there were tiny ferries, uncharted and perhaps unchartered, little more than private lanes for riverside folk whose interests encompassed the other shore. I have ridden on some of them; with pleasure I watched them go back and forth, and afterward I wrote some verses about them, and here they are:

#### THE LITTLE COUNTRY FERRIES

Every little country ferry  
Is a little allegory,  
And its pleasant little story  
Makes the heart a little merry.

All good journeys cross good waters:  
To the isle of Sancho Panza,  
To the reefs of old romanza,  
To the West Wind's apple-daughters.

Dame Calypso's lips vermilion  
Shape themselves on distant beaches,  
With engaging siren speeches,  
And adventures Maundevillian.

Such good people ride on rivers,  
And they make their joy each other's—  
Sacramented into brothers,  
Turned from getters into givers.

On a farther bank the showers  
Always seem to leave things greener;  
With a holiday demeanor,  
Highways hide away in flowers.

Yet when far horizons fether,  
Then I face about, and faring  
To the old shore, I come swearing  
That I like it rather better.

We moved beside thickets loud with cicadas, and heard along the water's edge the little kettledrums of the crickets, the silver rain of sparrow song, and we saw the small green heron, the fly-up-the-creek, flying up the wider reaches of the river.

This little heron is the symbol of solitude, and therefore of all inland rivers of the continent. It has interested me more than any other waterfowl. Because of its curious cry, it used to be known in Kentucky as the key-whack. Liberal shepherds know it by a grosser name. There is also a dim legend that it turns a key in a vine-masked door in the banks of creeks, enters a hidden chamber, and is transformed into a small long-nosed old man with a green coat, a wine-colored vest, and a French accent. Though they are reputed to dislike cities and the haunts of men, the little messieurs of Keywhackdom have been known to visit Cincinnati in the dawn hours, in seasons when drought had dried up the creeks, and take breakfast at garden pools where there were goldfish.

Great things and small were in the calendar of a summer day as I read it from the deck of a packet. Continents came and went on the ample map of the sky, and I noted that mostly the smaller clouds had the outlines of Ireland or the Indies, both of them areas of illusion. I

watched a plowman tracing his antique verse across the meadow's page. Something I divined of the private life of the pasture. I discovered that on occasion the red-bird uses a willow whistle. I beheld a mob of turkeys chasing grasshoppers in the wheat stubble, a rabble of blackbirds crossing a corn patch, and all the riotous communism of summer afield. Arrogant as is August, I learned that there is tolerant sunlight in its afternoons. As these faded, I saw nighthawks, riders of the twilight, questing the jeopardies of dusk, and heard in the meadow clamor the wail of moon-wistful plovers.

The night brought a second flowing thoroughfare, the Milky Way, the river of the sky. Then in the small hours another dominion usurped them both—the ultimate sovereignty of the fog, its gray, oblivious fingers blotting out the stars and beacon lights and winking fireflies, and veiling the hurricane deck, but lately the scene of laughter, banjo thrumming, and gay intermittencies of song.

So I traveled a tranquil stream which carries easily its burden of history and its nondescript traffic, the while it opens up the vivid green of American summers and turns page after page in the blue book of the sky. The wash of bow waters, the sighing of the steampipes, and the bluff song of head winds are in the record. At the end—it was Monday morning and we were moored beside the wharfboat, where Main Street meets the river—it was good to wake and hear the lowing of cattle and the crowing of cocks aboard. Thus with their flocks and herds, in an earlier day, came many of its First Families to Cincinnati.

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### III. Toward Dixie

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ON AN AFTERNOON IN JUNE I BOARDED THE STERN-wheeler *Southland*, down bound from Louisville for the lower stretches of the Ohio. Beside it at the foot of the public landing lay the side-wheeler *Cincinnati*, to and from which black roustabouts were moving cargo. Nearby was the beacon tower and boat of a coast guard station, the only one located on an inland river. Ferryboats plied the current. The side-wheeler excursion boat *America* was setting forth with a crowd of pleasure seekers in fantastic caps, its calliope playing a tune from *The Pirates of Penzance*; largest and gayest boats surviving on the Ohio and Mississippi, the excursion craft of the principal cities give a faithful if fugitive picture of the ancient splendor of the packets.

Years after Louisville was named for the French king who intervened for American independence, it was known in the Old West only as the Falls of the Ohio. Since a dam was thrown across the mile-wide river and a canal and lock built beside it, the elder name is seldom heard, for there are now as many falls as there are dams upon the river, and that is fifty-two. To one like myself, however, continuing a quest which had begun near the Forks

of the Ohio, this was still the Falls of the Ohio. Louisville was a rather vague picture of a broad plain, on it a city with wide streets and great brick churches, and somewhere in the background historic Bear Grass Creek and the outliers of the Kentucky knobs—"a range of low mountains," Audubon chose to call them. What the three-mile stretch of rapids spoke about was Corn Island, where the first settlement was made; George Rogers Clark, who founded the town before he conquered the Northwest; the log cabin on the Indiana side, where his proud spirit wasted itself under the blight of Virginia's ingratitude; the flatboats, laden with furs, corn, bacon, and brandy for Louisiana, that broke bulk above the rapids; and the spectral waterside taverns below, where Mississippi packets gathered up the waiting belles and dandies and bore them down to New Orleans.

By a wide canal, and locks which can lift or drop a boat nearly forty feet, we went around the Falls of the Ohio and into the lower river. Our first stop was at New Albany just below on the Indiana bank, where we took on some empty chicken coops. At this town, at Jeffersonville, just above the rapids, and at Madison, halfway between Louisville and Cincinnati, most of the steamboats of the Western waters have been built. New Albany turned out the *Robert E. Lee*, which beat the Cincinnati-made *Natchez* in the most famous of all river races. One family, the Howards of Jeffersonville and Madison, have been making boats for three generations, and their output of packets, barges, and towboats runs into the thousands.

On one of these boats I was riding. The *Southland* is well named, in that something of the South invests all boats on the waters of inland America. There is a story

in their names. Some have had a half a dozen different ones, changing them with new owners or perhaps to change their luck; thus, for example, the *Concordia* became the *Uncle Oliver*. Sometimes half a dozen different boats have borne the same name in succession. Belle is a favorite, as witness *Arkansaw Belle*, *Missouri Belle*, *Tennessee Belle*, *Mountain Belle*, *Valley Belle*, *Belle of Calhoun*, *Belle of the Bends*. Many boats have carried the names of river cities. Some have been called after notable men whose names begin with Henry, as *Henry Clay*, *Henry Watterson*, *Henry M. Stanley*, *Henry W. Longfellow*. One captain may name his boat after his daughter, another his daughter after his boat. Boats have had bird names, such as *Kingfisher*, *Swallow*, *Oriole*, *Dove*, *Halcyon*, *Wild Goose*, *Black Hawk*, *Bald Eagle*, *Golden Eagle*, *Gray Eagle*, *Spread Eagle*; animal names, like the *Antelope*, *Beaver*, *Reindeer*, *Jack Rabbit*; plant names, like *Grapevine*, *Dandelion*, *Poppy*, *Wakerobin*, *Cotton Blossom*, *Water Lily*; insect names, like *Katydid*, *Hornet*, *Firefly*, *Cricket*; astronomical names, like *Altair*, *Comet*, *North Star*, *Star of the West*, *Silver Moon*, *Sunrise*; facetious names, like *Rascal*, *Whisper*, *Hard Cash*, *Gravel Boy*, and *Big-a-Plenty*. For a while the government quarterboat *Summer Girl* was towed by the *Chaperon*.

The *Southland* itself might be called another *Belle of the Bends*. A winding river like the Ohio creates considerable pockets of land and population into which neither railroads nor main highways penetrate. Trucks have gone into them for a while and come out racked to pieces by roads that would not stand up under their burden. For such areas packets are the logical common carriers. Should they cease to run, people along the

inner curve of these great bends would be in something of a predicament, and they would have dull summer evenings but for the occasional visits of showboats. Until one reaches Owensboro and Evansville there are no large towns on this stretch of the river, but there are interesting county seats, the varied appeal of wooded and winding shores, and glimpses of an always significant water-side life.

I liked the trip as I like all river travel. Aboard a packet, life goes on about as it does ashore although at easier pace, and meanwhile you are getting somewhere. You have your own room to retire to. Though Mrs. Trollope injuriously likens it to "the exercise of an ass in a mill," you have space for a promenade, and the choice of walking companions should you wish any, and it is easy to get acquainted with people. Work proceeds at the tolerant steamboat tempo, and society in its various grades performs it. Goods and chattels of the countryside travel with you on the lower deck. Cattle, horses, mules, pigs, chickens share the voyage. Not a ship of state, but something of an ark is a packet.

I sat down to supper with about forty others. Three long tables were set in the cabin, the women and children at one of them—an old and mainly disused custom at which English travelers railed. Steamboat meals are beneficiaries of a tradition which arose in the day when people had rude homes in the woods, fried everything they ate, and deemed a packet the last word in luxurious living. Meals are, however, plentiful, savory, and well cooked. We had beefsteak, steak gravy, green beans and bacon, hot biscuit, coffee, and a dessert. The coffee was notably good, as steamboat coffee seems always to be.

After supper I sat in the cabin and listened for a while



to the Democratic National Convention in distant Houston. Then I went on deck and watched the moon ride the brimming and broadening river and the searchlights scanning its shores. Whenever we neared a bend, the whistle sounded a mellow, musical, full-throated warning. I complimented the master, Captain Edgar Williams, upon it, and he told its history. Another captain stole the whistle about a hundred years ago from a sea boat in New Orleans. It cost the packet company ten thousand dollars to defend its possession in lawsuits. The whistle has been attached to a succession of boats ever since, and is about the most venerable thing on the river.

A number of the old steamboat bells, released from surroundings venturous or profane, now call children to study and people to prayer in the schools and churches of the waterside towns. River people have a sentiment about whistles and bells. The first steamboat whistle is the harbinger of spring. The *Waterways Journal*, sometimes called the riverman's Bible, keeps tabs on all whistles and bells afloat. Whenever there is a wreck, the whistle is salvaged and used again. The *Tom Greene's* has been on seven other boats. In one Indiana town where the courthouse clock went wrong, people set their timepieces year after year by the seven-o'clock whistle of a steamboat. In another Indiana town, a boat captain was buried on the river bank so that passing packets could salute his memory in their own sonorous fashion, and for fifty years they did so.

During the evening we passed Brandenburg, a cluster of shore lights on the Kentucky side, and on the hill the dim outlines of houses among trees with a courthouse steeple rising among them. There in July, 1863, John

Morgan crossed the river in his raid through Indiana and Ohio. I have visited the place. In the dining room of the Buckner homestead, where Confederate officers had their headquarters during the crossing, I found a haunting picture of Morgan—bearded, booted, slouch-hatted; a swashbuckler with a gaze at once insouciant and reflective. Empty chairs stood about the mahogany board, with the china and silver just as they were when the officers ate there, the river below them and unknown fates ahead. With a glance my companion shivered and turned away. "Ghosts!" he said.

Local tradition as detailed by the *Southland's* captain adds something. One of the steamboats used for the crossing was the *Alice Deane*. As the story goes, Morgan asked its captain if he was a Southern sympathizer. "Hell, no!" was the reply; whereupon the boat was scuttled; until dams came, its hull was visible at low water. When the raiders showed themselves at the river, a Mauckport man jumped on a horse and rode five miles to warn an approaching packet; its grateful owners gave the town a bell, which still summons children to school.

Other tales of the time and neighborhood: At Corydon, a few miles back, Morgan's lads joined a Hoosier lass in singing "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" and kindred Northern airs around the piano, because she could not play their own. An army officer was shot dead by a girl's lover when he plucked the Copperhead emblem (a butternut breastpin) from her bosom, and the local jury returned an acquittal; nowadays, as casually as a Buckeye might say, "My niece is a platinum blonde," a Hoosier will tell you, "My uncle was a Copperhead." Twenty years after the Civil War came the Whitecaps, and it was woe to the widowed farmer who had a pretty

hired girl in his kitchen. They made the mistake of putting a rope around the neck of a red-haired girl, for her backwoods brothers were hiding in the corn with shotguns. Funerals followed in five well-known families, and in one county a movement to regulate conduct adjourned sine die.

The river plain, four miles below Mauckport, was the scene of a story not in the histories, but affirmed by dim tradition. Thither, at the close of the Revolution, came a number of Irish soldiers in the service of King George, probably from Detroit. Unwilling to return to Great Britain, or to take oath of allegiance to the colonies, they floated down the Ohio and settled in bottom lands on both sides in villages which they called Northampton and Southampton. There they raced horses on a mile track. Women came with them or drifted in afterward. They were tough little towns and both have disappeared, leaving no trace except building stones, still to be seen along wall fences.

The captain of the *Southland* looked at the moon and changed the subject of conversation to fogs. Should the wind die down there might be fog; it comes suddenly, on clear nights in deep valleys where a creek enters the river, he explained. There were hills on either side and just below was the mouth of a creek. The wind failed as we reached it, little wisps of vapor rose from the water, the whistle blew, the bell sounded, and in all haste we headed for shore. By the time we got behind the willows, the world had disappeared. For ten hours, until long after sunup, we lay hidden there. Fog is negation. Fog is nothingness, vapor of water if you please, but an allegory of chaos. Rivermen are wary of its perils, resentful of its results, for they must feed passengers perhaps

a day longer; with knife and fork, as they say, the traveler dredges his way through profits.

Packet staterooms, by no means stately, are so called because once they bore the names of American commonwealths, an honor now restricted to the texas on the upper deck. My room was a nook with a comfortable bed, a washstand, a towel rack, an ancient hassock. At breakfast the next morning the venerable black waiter, for reasons doubtless good, would not serve me with soft-boiled eggs; he brought them fried with bacon, and there was also hominy, toast, potatoes, and coffee. While I ate, I pondered a placard which admonished passengers not to gamble or smoke in their rooms, nor to enter the ladies' cabin, unless a lady was along. This forbidden area in the stern of the boat was bounded by an invisible line, but could be identified by the carpet, a tall mirror, a piano, a settee, and leather-seated chairs. The men's lounge at the other end of the cabin had ordinary cane-seated chairs.

The artist, Frank Blackwell Mayer, who traveled the river in 1851, called a steamboat "a combination of improved chicken coops and teakettles slipping down a waveless stream." How did he get that way? Whenever the *Southland* halted at a town, I went ashore to look it over, and always my gaze rested with appreciation on the boat itself. It was so much like a thousand other packets whose pictures I have seen in old travel books that it seemed to embody the whole romantic record of inland navigation. Are packets as comely as they seem, or is it that you always view them in a setting of green hills and tranquil water? They turn upon you a face as friendly and confiding as the beflounced belles who animated their cabins in the long ago. An ocean boat hides

all it holds within steel walls; a river boat shows you pretty nearly everything—its plashing, musical wheel, its white decks, its passengers, roustabouts, cargo, live-stock. As open to the air as any gaudy summer pavilion, it has the same holiday aspect.

Older houses on the bluffs have copied its scheme of decoration in their eaves and porches; this style of architecture is called Steamboat Gothic.

Rivers are as they were, but mostly the steamboats are gone. There are, or when I made the trip there were, passenger boats on the Ohio, Big Kanawha, Kentucky, Green, Barren, Illinois, lower Tennessee and Mississippi rivers, and in the bayous of Louisiana. Yet the list is small compared with yesterday's, when packets were also on the Muskingum, Guyandot, Little Kanawha, Big Hocking, Salt, Wabash, upper Tennessee, upper and lower Cumberland, upper and lower Missouri, Arkansas, Red, White, Ouachita, Yazoo, Warrior, Atchafalaya, Hiwassee, Obion, Meramec, St. Francis.

It is estimated that four thousand steamboats have plied the western waters. They went nearly everywhere, for the low-water packets could navigate streams only fourteen inches deep, and all streams had their high-water periods. "Fifty-seven large, navigable rivers contribute to the Mississippi," said de Tocqueville a century ago. On them steamboats bore explorers, fur traders, wilderness hunters, soldiers, emigrant families, circuses, theatrical companies, tourists, raftsmen, card sharps. They towed or carried salt, sugar cane, hogs-heads of sugar and molasses, tobacco, cotton, rice, corn, wheat, potatoes, mussel shells, coal, logs, barrel staves, railroad ties, mine props, sulphur, potash, sisal. To serve this trade, boat stores sprang up along the levees of the

larger towns. One of them, still in existence in St. Louis, is nearly a century old.

Nowadays river travel is wonderfully safe, boats are content with from eight to twelve miles an hour, and the only deaths they have to report are from overeating. But most of the older boats lasted less than four years. Then they blew up, burned down, plopped over a dam, ran through themselves (a river idiom), were snagged, sunk in collision, grounded on a bar, knocked out by a thunderbolt, bogged down in a cornfield in fog and high water; or they just naturally wore out. In 1848, no less than 344 were worn out and abandoned, 233 were sunk, and many more burned up. In a later period superfluous packets were sold South, as slaves used to be. When they were dismantled, Negroes along the Sugar Coast got free firewood.

Steamboats ranged in carrying capacity from more than two thousand to less than two hundred tons. You could build one for fifteen thousand dollars. Some were single-decked, a few had only a single stack, one at least had a brick chimney. Many were assembled from the sound parts of older craft. It was long the fashion to gild paddle boxes like sunbursts or decorate them with elaborate oil paintings like a circus van. There were good paintings also on the cabin walls and ceiling and on the stateroom doors. One boat had Biblical inscriptions and these were retained when a later owner installed a bar.

Because the packets have become scarce, the rivers seem empty now; but they are not. A side-wheeler, built in Cincinnati sixty years ago, delivered at New Orleans in one trip 4,484 bales of cotton, 10,055 sacks of cottonseed, 1,069 barrels of cottonseed oil, and 3,509 sacks of

cottonseed-oil cake and hulls; and that seemed what the pilots call a good freight trip. Yet not long ago a tow of steel came down the Ohio with a tonnage nearly five times as great, a tonnage that would have filled two thousand five-ton trucks. A single Pittsburgh steel company has a fleet of barges and towboats with a carrying capacity equal to three hundred of the old-time packets. In the six years between 1924 and 1930, the Ohio's traffic doubled to 22,000,000 tons.

The men who ran the packets were old-time Americans with the easy manners and direct outlook of mountain-folk. Present-day rivermen, mostly their children and grandchildren, are very like them—in spirit neither of North nor of South but of that Old West that antedated sections. A strong friendship binds them. They spend vacations riding on each other's boats; they are as one in detesting bridges as channel-cramping boat breakers; when they race, as still they are prone to do, the victor seems half to regret the defeat of a friend. When one dies, other rivermen write his obituary. He is gone, they say, where the rivers are deep and no snags hidden in them; yet there is a tradition that after death the soul of a pilot passes into a white mule. At river conventions, often held afloat, the salute in memory of the dead is three blasts followed by a whistled "All's Well."

These men have a language of their own, made up of fine old words that are fading out of usage elsewhere, trade terms, and the racy idioms of the river. They speak of boats being chartered, or libeled, or sold at public vendue; of villages that are backwoods ports; of towns that are ports of call. They talk of short trades and long trades, of the tar-towing trade, and of the calf trade between Pittsburgh and Charleston. A boat whistles

for a landing, is made fast, turns a lively wheel, proceeds under a slow bell, obeys the backing bell, clears for the upper river, is laid up for repairs, winters with the government fleet at the Cape. It is loaded flat with wheat, rubs the river bottom, locks through a dam, goes South on coal-boat water, washes out a landing with its wheel, is ripped by a flood from its moorings, or cut down by ice, or burned to the water's edge. The stream is rank with a flood, or choked by an ice gorge, or heavy with slush ice, or animated by a splash rise, or quickened by a runout; or it gets thin and goes down to a mere trickle; if it is the Ohio, it is slack-watered and often in pool.

Pilots have to learn the river, know all the stern marks and head marks, and keep an eye out for log rafts, towboats, quarterboats, work boats, derrick boats, hopped barges, car floats, houseboats, shantyboats, shoatboats, snagboats, clamshell dredges, lighters, ferryboats, water darters, cabin cruisers, wharfboats, landing flats. Floating drift, planters, sawyers, shoals, day marks and government lights, lanterns moving in the fields—the man in the pilothouse must watch them all. His speech is of such matters as bear-traps, navigable passes, chutes, cofferdams, dikes, cribbing, riprap, revetments, willow mattresses, towing knees, swinging stages, cattleguards, hog-chains, splashboards. The phrase, "When I steam-boated," on the lips of a retired captain is the signal that a good story is coming.

It looks as if such stories would always be told, which is to say that there will always be packets, just as there will always be saddle horses in the Eastern mountains. The river lays a spell upon those who follow it for a livelihood, and they are unhappy anywhere else. As for the rest of us, we may ship little freight by the passenger



boats, but now and then we shall want to ride upon them.

There were perhaps forty landing places on the *Southland's* list, and with a number of these we did a varied traffic on our trip down the river. At a Kentucky village a roustabout carried off a hatbox and a purple parasol. At an Indiana village we sent ashore the household effects of a family which was moving by river—a pioneer custom that survives. Farther down, we took on seven tons of timothy hay, the bales weighing a little over a hundred pounds apiece; the roustabouts carried them lightly. These men were full-blood blacks, happy, efficient, nimble of foot. It was easy to fancy that their cousins had been porters for Stanley when he penetrated Darkest Africa.

So we loafed along from landing to landing, gossiping with natives, passing cornfields with their feet in the river, moving beside low banks white with blossoming elderberries, thrusting so far into the willows that their broken twigs littered the deck, descending a broader stream with wider views and longer vistas than the hill-walled upper Ohio.

When we stopped for an hour at Hawesville to take on coal, I explored the town, which was half hidden behind a cornfield. What interested me most was the ancient brick courthouse of this Kentucky county seat. On the stone steps were two old-fashioned footscrapers, survivals of the time when neither streets nor sidewalks were paved. In the main hall were boatlike coalbins, a wheelbarrow, a lawn mower, other garden tools. A fossil shell lay beside the courtroom door. The temple of justice in bucolic regions is something between a tool shed and a museum of curios and local antiquities. Fossils drift into such places, and some of them hold office.

Rivermen aboard had tales of other days, other

streams. The mate told of snagging on the Wabash a score of years earlier. When a snag was located, a diver descended and fastened a chain about it, and it was hoisted to the bow, cut up with a crosscut saw, and the pieces put ashore. Once in a hollow tree the crew found a fourteen-pound mudcat, whose tail the saw had cut off. Yet the tree's only aperture would scarcely admit a one-pound fish; the cat had entered its den in early youth, fed so heartily that it could not get out, and subsisted thereafter on the worms that infest submerged wood. In another snag the men caught a sixty-pound catfish which was using it as a harbor. When a tree stands upright in the water, it is belted with sticks of dynamite attached to a cloth which is lowered to the desired depth and set off; this cuts the trunk cleanly, and leaves no hidden danger to navigation. Once the mate put some fragments of bread around a sycamore the night before it was blasted off. The captain was amazed when the air was filled with flying fish, but the fish found their way to the table.

"We had good times on the Wabash," sighed the mate. "The boat had a fiddle and guitar aboard, and mustered a sort of string band, as many government snagboats do. Country people would gather at landings to hear our concerts, and sometimes we gave a dance."

Another veteran had been afloat since he was fourteen—snagging on the Green, boating corn in winter from forty miles up the Wabash, navigating in turn the Salt, the Cumberland, the Illinois, and the Missouri. He recalled old gambling days on the river. Men played for large stakes on packets that plied the Ohio between Evansville and Paducah, but the keenest gamblers infested the Illinois; "a hard crowd," he called them.

In the late afternoon the *Southland* moved into a great bend of the Ohio, and we found ourselves in the middle province of the Lincoln country. When Thomas Lincoln left the waters of Salt River in 1816 and came to Indiana, he landed at Anderson's Creek beside the town of Troy, and struck off ten miles into the woods, where he built a half-face winter camp for his family near the present town of Gentryville. From the creek's mouth young Lincoln set forth on his first flatboat expedition to New Orleans. Something of the river idiom in his speech dates from this period of contacts with America afloat. We had a glimpse of the creek and the little town of Troy.

Late in the evening I reached Owensboro, a considerable Kentucky city with a great tobacco county behind it, and with exciting memories of night-riding planters. As I walked to my hotel, the voice of Franklin Roosevelt, nominating Al Smith at Houston, floated along the street. The next morning two of us went on to Evansville on the Indiana side by government car, ferry, and the interurban. That was the year, and this the week, of the Big Rain. We got into trouble on a dirt road on which river water was backing and had to turn off into farm lanes. When we reached the ferry, we found ourselves in a tomato field over which killdeer called dismally. The ferry bell was gone, there was no boat, and the opposite shore was almost hidden by the driving rain. We blew our horn, we sang, we shouted; but nothing happened until I dug up a white shirt from my bag and waved it steadily. After an hour, in which the river rose near enough to the top of the bank to make us uneasy, a boat came over.

While at Evansville awaiting the going of the Green

River boat, I attended the night show of a small stock company. The play told the story of a war baby and its unwedded parents, and how the grandfather's campaign for mayor was blasted by the arrival of a natural descendant. Characters came and went at random and emitted all their speeches from the back of the stage; between the acts they sang and danced before the curtain, assisted by half a dozen chorus girls wearing tights, and wisps of other garments like chemises—an agreeable and singularly demure battalion of youngsters. From the mixture of drama and variety, once the vogue everywhere but now confined to floating theaters, I guessed that it was a showboat company come ashore.

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## *IV. Into the Back Country*

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IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT THE TELEPHONE RANG IN MY room in a hotel in Evansville, and a voice said that the boat for Green River would leave "in a scant hour." Dressing, I descended to the office where scrubwomen were at work, paid my bill, and went out into the dark. In the shadowy wharfboat I was told that Captain Jeff Williams had "done fixed a room" for me. I turned in at once, and knew no more until the beating of a tin pan summoned me to the seven-o'clock breakfast. It was what you would call a good farmer's meal—rice fixed with tomatoes and onions and very tasty; bacon, sausage, hot biscuit, fried apples, coffee. A portly and comely countrywoman and her small son sat with me; the officers, as is usual, had their own table.

While I was asleep, we had ascended the Ohio for nine miles, entered Green River, and plunged into the back country of Kentucky; the trip to Bowling Green, a hundred and eighty miles away on Barren River, was well begun. Our craft seemed almost barricaded with the freight that it carried. On all the Western waters boats carry in chicken- and stock-feed, and bring out poultry, eggs, cream, and livestock.

This was the *Hazel Rice*, only by courtesy of the occasion a packet. It was a small, crude, stanch, old square-bowed towboat used in the rock asphalt trade—one of two built by a woman in Memphis. The regular Green River packet *Evansville*, under repairs on the ways at Paducah, was a stern-wheeler of consequence. In the summer season it made a weekly excursion trip two hundred miles upstream to Mammoth Cave, the entrance to which is but a short walk from the landing place on Green River. On a recent trip it had carried five hundred head of hogs. Captain Sam Smith, now of the *Waterways Journal*, was formerly its master; he says that in 1906 an average trip included a hundred cabin passengers, ninety-eight hogsheads of tobacco, forty head of cattle, four hundred hogs, sheep, and calves, fifty to seventy-five coops of poultry, and three hundred cases of eggs, together with miscellaneous cargo.

Perhaps because he knew I was a writer, and had misgivings as to what I might say, Captain Jeff Williams, president of the line, had sought to dissuade me from the trip when I saw him in Evansville the day before, advising me to wait until the bigger boat was running. His brother, Captain William Williams, master of the *Hazel Rice*, looked puzzled when I told him that I was finding the trip interesting. The cluttered decks and knockabout accommodations were no drawback; I had come to see the river, and chance brought me upon it in an unusual week. More rain falls in Kentucky than in the states farther north, and more fell that month than ever before. The downfall on the preceding day, which had marooned me for a while at an Ohio ferry landing, was three inches.

At every place we stopped along Green, people asked

"How's the river?" "It's up," was the unvarying answer. High water had covered the rich bottom lands, in places doubling the river's width. Cornfields, repeatedly drowned out and replanted, looked yellow and sickly. Nearly forty thousand acres were underwater, nearly eight hundred families in trouble. Warehouses on the banks were tilted over by the flood, and goods were stored in sheds higher up. Only twenty feet of a ninety-foot sycamore, which had been detached in a landslide and now stood some distance from shore, were visible above the water.

Green River was at its deepest and rivermen claim that it has deeper stretches than any other. Flowing through a cavernous, limestone country, its middle course was once an underground river, like Echo River in Mammoth Cave, its tributary. They also tell you that it is the narrowest stream that can be navigated for any great distance by full-size steamboats. It has been continuously navigated a longer time—more than a century—than any other tributary of the Ohio. Six locks and dams, built by the state and taken over by the nation, provide a constant five-foot channel. Three hundred miles long, something less than three hundred feet wide, and winding all the time, it is a challenge to a steamboat a hundred and twenty feet long and with thirty-two feet of beam. On its main affluent, Big Barren, which is half as wide, the turning of the steamboat is a thing to be solved only at the mouth of a friendly creek.

We went up a four-mile current at seven miles an hour, the cottonwoods, beeches, and catalpas along the banks nodding to the swollen waters. The pilot volunteered the information that the catalpa worm, which is something like the tobacco worm, makes good fish bait.

He said that Green River got its name from its color, and its color is due to its depth, and it practically never freezes in winter, and this is due to the underground streams which flow into it and the springs which rise in its bed, and that is why there are so many fogs, and why the river has been so much used as an ice harbor by showboats and other craft.

Just at that moment we passed a showboat at a village landing. Edna Ferber's novel and the vivid musical romance based upon it have made these theater-barges the objects of a friendly national curiosity which often their owners seem to resent. There are, or recently there were, fourteen showboats on the Western rivers. With seats for 1,400 persons, the *Goldenrod* was the largest. Whenever I make a water journey of any length I come across them and sometimes attend their performances.

In comradely, steamboat fashion the officers of the *Hazel Rice* detailed the gossip of the river. While cattle and pigs made trouble on entering or leaving a boat, it was said they behaved better than people so long as they were on board; they stood quiet when a wind blew up, instead of rushing to and fro, nor did they all crowd to one side at the landings. On the navigable portions of Green, only two mills were left. Every farm had its skiff to maintain neighborly relations between shores. Along some stretches of the river small boats carried the mail. While bottom lands were often flooded, they grew better corn than the hills back of them, and better than the Ohio bottoms. Rattlesnakes and copperheads abounded. Catfish, buffalo, and green bass swarmed in the river. One of the pilots had seen a seventy-four-pound cat landed the week before. In spring and fall there were great flocks of wild ducks. The tributary



streams were interesting. Big Barren flows for a while between vertical cliffs like the sides of a tunnel. Nolin is called the crookedest waterway in the country. Pond River is navigated by gasoline boats which bring down crossties in barges. Rough River has a lock and dam, and is navigable for thirty miles up. On Gaspar began the Kentucky Revival, which sowed the Old West with new religions. Near Muddy River, Jefferson Davis was born. Green River claims him, as Salt claims Abraham Lincoln.

What little I knew at first hand of the country beyond boatwater I told the officers in return. I had heard the Green River pig-call, which is a memorable thing. I had interviewed a hillwoman who said that the whippoorwill laid two eggs, shaped like goose eggs, plumb on the ground, and sometimes you found its nest while hunting for huckleberries. Her folks killed "the big bluebirds" (jays) because they war with the martins, and redbirds because they pilfer grain from corncribs, and blackbirds because they are good eating; but not the martin because it drives hawks from the henyard and "hollers pretty."

On the headwaters of Green I had walked in Morning-Glory Land—a domain of outside stone chimneys, and fence stiles instead of gates; of saddle horses and mule cavaliers; of red roads and pink sunbonnets, with fiddles scraping or guitars twanging in the farmhouses. There I came across another bit of Kentucky idiom. A hospitable woman asked me to "pass by" her house.

"But I am doing that now," I said, a little puzzled.

I learned that to pass by in Kentucky is not to pass by but to come in and perhaps have a glass of elderberry wine.

People in Morning-Glory Land were talking about a

shooting affray the day before I had passed through. A father and two sons had already been killed, and the third, meeting up with a slow-spoken farmer at a county fair, shot him thrice, receiving six bullets in return. The young farmer's mother bent over him to ask the traditional question:

"Why did you shoot, son?"

"Couldn't he'p it, mammy. He shot first.—Hit don't matter now," he added. "I'm kilt dead, mammy."

And he was.

At the noon meal on the boat we had roast beef, mashed potatoes, lettuce, corn bread, white bread, pickles, quartered onions, wild mustard greens, coffee, and pump-kin pie. The salad interested me, and I learned that the mustard is often sowed in gardens, that it is mingled with turnip-tops to mitigate their bitterness, and that hog jowl helps the flavor. It was said that this was because of the neck glands, and that jowl should be cured by smoking over a fire of hickory or sassafras. A native asserted that rabbit meat was the best of all foods, since the rabbit was the strictest vegetarian and a dainty feeder. I changed the subject to edible birds, but elicited nothing definite except the Kentucky saying that when the first whippoorwill sounded in spring it was a proclamation that, thereafter, women must chop and carry in the firewood since the farmer's call to the fields had come.

On deck again, I studied the shores of the Green River country. It is a region of ancient settlement, and many of the inhabitants are of Revolutionary origin. Here was the first considerable grazing area west of the mountains, cattle and horses feeding in the free range of prairie land, and hogs in the hills; the cattle were driven

to the seaboard, the horses and mules to cotton plantations, the hogs butchered, salted, and shipped South by boat. Through the eastern section runs the old corridor between Lexington and Nashville; along this route moved some pioneer commerce, and along it also moved merchants and planters, coming back by land from river expeditions of trade or pleasure to Natchez and New Orleans.

Two great highways traverse the region now, yet there are plenty of survivals of the old road system—creek roads in the upper river stretches; all-weather roads, as the old ungraded pikes were named; so-called hand-roads, primitive pioneer ways intended rather for goods than people. Bridges and fords are few. Most of the routes run along ridges. Nearly all converge on county seats. These are the principal towns, politics rather than commerce determining the centers of population and the highway pattern.

This is the Dark Tobacco country. In the western area the plant is fire-cured in barns, the custom dating back to the discovery, early in the preceding century, that tobacco, thus prepared, would keep perfectly in the holds of ocean vessels. The taste for a heavy, smoky-flavored weed was implanted in the European peoples. A variety of this, with long, coarse leaves tied in small bundles, goes to the natives of Africa, and to Latin America.

Tobacco is the cash crop of the Green River country. Corn, the main food crop, is ground for family use at the nearest mill. A good deal of honey is gathered in the hill counties. Sorghum is grown for cattle and poultry feed, and for the table. Many dwellings stand in groves of black locusts. Log cabins and box houses are found along the ridges, and in coves of the Knobs. Eggs,

strong coffee, corn bread, biscuit, and hog meat with lots of gravy are the staples of diet.

There is plenty of coal. Now and then we saw barges laden with Kentucky rock asphalt from Nolin River. At Livermore an old household industry keeps people busy. Lumber, mainly elm and beech, is floated downstream—there was a log raft moored near the landing—and cut up at two chair factories. The unfinished frames, rungs, and splints are taken to homes where women and children put them together and weave the cane seats; the chairs are then collected, varnished, and sold South.

They used to make iron in Kentucky, and near the town of Calhoun I saw the ruins of a furnace which is remembered only because Don Carlos Buell, commander of the Army of the Ohio, was in charge there after the Civil War. Buell came up just in time at Shiloh, beat Bragg in the race to Louisville, fought a drawn battle with him at Perryville, and pursued him out of Kentucky, but so slowly, as the Washington high command thought, that he was court-martialed and relieved, all his active service falling in the year 1862. He was a brave and competent officer who got less than justice. The master of our boat knew him in his later years—"a peculiar old man," tall, square-built, bearded, with stately bearing, an impressive figure on horseback. Shiloh, where he may have saved Grant, was the great moment in his life, and he always turned up at the battle anniversaries.

The river held other history for me. Still the raccoon washes his food in its waters, the muskrat burrows in its banks, and the fox has his den in rocky ledges of its woods. But the river is associated, as perhaps none other, with the poignant story of creatures no longer seen there. It has a word of its own to say about one vanishing and two

vanished denizens of the wild. Before the buffalo fled back across the Mississippi, its last stronghold was on the headwaters of Green. It had done memorable service for all the region it was quitting. Finding the hill passes and the river fords, locating salt springs where fashionable resorts grew up afterward, laying out ridge roads which are still used, cutting through forest and cane deep, wagon-wide streets, the buffalo was pathfinder alike for savage and for civilized society.

Early travelers noted that the Green River country was a great breeding place and roosting place of the Carolina parakeets. Their homes were in the hollow sycamores of its banks, scores of birds tenanted a single tree. Because they liked the waters of salt licks, they frequented Kentucky. When they alighted on the ground, says Alexander Wilson, "it appeared from a distance as if covered with a carpet of the richest green, red and yellow." Passenger pigeons also liked the saline waters of Kentucky, and in almost fabulous numbers thronged the beech forests of Green River. One of their roosts was forty miles long and three miles wide; the noise of their coming in at night was like that of a hard gale at sea. Audubon saw one flock which may have contained more than a billion individuals. Both parakeet and pigeon are now extinct.

Through the dusk we climbed the river, stopping at towns where sunburned men in blue denim and fair-faced women in pink sunbonnets, standing in the dim light of warehouse lanterns, gazed steadily at us. When I awoke the next morning it was to find the *Hazel Rice* nosed into the bank below a lock which was drowned by high water. We could not get through it, nor could we jump the dam, which was an angry riffle of broken billows.

The river below it had risen eight feet the day before. If we waited until afternoon we might yet get over, the captain thought. Some of the crew got out fishing lines. A calf and four crates of fowls were taken aboard. A mailboat came up from Livermore and embarked three passengers. Our mate began plaiting a lash for an ox-whip out of strips of elm bark. It was good for a month, he said; often he had mended harness with this bark.

A mockingbird was singing, and while I waited I listened. I sat on a fence stile under a honey locust. He sat on the ridgepole of a gray old barn and entertained me with the mingled pride and eagerness to please that mark the artist. Blackbirds were fluting on the drift, mourning doves and catbirds calling along the hillside. A redbird cracked his whip and hallooed from a willow. Once a jay blew his tin whistle in an apple orchard. The mockingbird gave back these songs and wove his own modulations through them, turning the nasal notes of the jay into something all of silver. In the background was the drone of bees in the clover, the clang of cowbells, the organ music of tumbling water.

After the midday meal the captain gave up hope of completing the trip. Turning back, we swiftly descended the river. I got off at Rockport, twelve miles down, and detoured overland through Hollow America.

Walking there, I had an uneasy sense that something had happened to the country. There were sinkholes—"goose nests," the natives call them—by tens of thousands, but little running water. These were not valleys, for they did not open into each other. Where there was a true valley, it might be but the corridor of a collapsed cavern; in it the country road ran, and I followed in sunlight a way along which cave men may have groped in

darkness. Farmers ballyhooed from the crossroads, and in the soft Southern speech advised me that petrified men and Stone Age skeletons were in the domains they served. In the rural cemeteries I saw stalactites doing duty as tombstones.

Six trap doors are in my memories of Hollow America. What lay beyond the trap doors of Mammoth Cave and the other five which I explored was a phantasmagoria of endless passages, vaulted domes innumerable, all-enveloping darkness, the drip of water breaking a silence that in more senses than one is the silence of the grave. Your torch illumines: a frozen Niagara half as high as the cataract, seemingly struck into silence and marble; the noble semblance of altar screens; corridors of alabaster with columns and statues; chamber after chamber all of crystal; outlines of men and beasts and of men's handiwork and habitations repeated at their strangest and stateliest. Yet you come out into the vital vigor of the day pondering the saying that men should avoid places lighted by neither sun nor moon, and reflecting that only by quitting it for a space may you know the utter beauty of the earth.

After two days I reached Bowling Green. There, a mile or so from a square in which were statues of Pomona, Flora, Ceres, Melpomene and Hebe, I found a narrow stream that appeared from behind trees, made a sharp turn, and disappeared again. I was at the head of navigation on Barren River.

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## *V. Among the Pearl Fishers*

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AT FORT HENRY I BOARDED A BUTTER-AND-EGG BOAT AND went down upon it to Paducah, at the mouth of the Tennessee. To reach this ruinous old Civil War hold, where Grant first revealed the stuff that was in him, I traveled by train from Bowling Green, crossed the swollen Cumberland, and boarding a rural mail car at the village of Danville, rode with the carrier while he delivered letters and parcels in the mesopotamian region between the two rivers.

Through a land dotted with tall tobacco barns we followed rough ways with steep grades, deep ruts and puddles, and unnamed, unbridged creeks down which torrents had washed masses of sand and stones; at one place the road was closed by the roots of a storm-shattered locust which raised a barricade twenty feet high across it. Half the farm dwellings were of logs, with outside brick chimneys, and yet not what you would call log cabins; when two cabins are whitewashed and placed end to end, having between them a spacious hall or patio which is roofed and yet otherwise open to the air, and just the place for a woman to pare potatoes and snap beans, what you have is a hospitable log house. The patio is known as the dog-trot.



At the noon hour people were on the porches, everybody barelegged except the man of the house; one bare-foot lass was waiting at the gate for shoes which we had brought along. Halting before a wayside springhouse in which milk and butter were cooled by running water, we drank from the overflow. We halted again before a log commissary, big as twenty cabins, where iron ore had been dug and smelted a generation before, and whence railroad ties are floated down the Tennessee. Among its commodities were bags of seed grains, oars, muleshoes, plowshares, plow handles and work shirts; there for twenty-five cents I bought a bucolic straw hat.

Where the road turned toward the Fort Henry ferry landing, I got off at a general store, the proprietor of which—a tall, fine-looking young man of Kentucky blood—readily agreed to take me into his house for the night. I found a cool place with a rocking chair under a tree by the road and let the long, hot afternoon wear tranquilly away. That I was in a feud-ridden region I never learned until I had left it.

Supper was served after milking. Would I ask the blessing? I did not feel competent, but anyway did justice to an abundant meal of home-cured ham, fried eggs, corn bread, hot biscuits, potatoes, ham gravy, beets, onions, pie, and coffee. The man of the house went back to the store, his wife fed the dog, the cats and their kittens, and prepared the two children for bed. In the grateful cool of the evening, with the sun a red ball on the horizon, I walked to the river and went through the fort.

Preston Johnston, biographer of his father, Albert Sidney Johnston, Confederate commander in the West, says: "There has been much discussion as to who originated the movement up the Tennessee River. Grant made

it, and it made Grant." While newly fledged military leaders were watching each other, and marking time, Grant got under way, and moved fast. Fort Henry fell at once. Its capture, in February, 1862, was only a prelude to the capture of Fort Donelson, eleven miles east on the Cumberland, the following week, with fifteen thousand prisoners—a major achievement. With the fall of both, two great rivers leading into the heart of the Confederacy were open to the Union armies.

I found a camp of mussel fishers boiling their catch on the ruinous esplanade, and within the fort a cornfield and a cabin. The ramparts may have enclosed ten acres. Their course could be traced by the trees and bushes—sassafras, elder, sumac, black gums, sweet gums, elms, and walnuts—that had grown upon them since the Civil War. On one side, a ditch had become a sort of moat of still water along which cane was standing.

At the landing I met Ben Brewer, a sturdy old hard-shell, and went with him to his cabin inside the fort. Perhaps I won his favor when I said that I had once descended the upper Cumberland on a steamboat. He knew the Kentucky mountains, he said, and was Kentucky-born himself. A generation before, he had left Virginia on a shantyboat, dropping down a small creek into the Tennessee, passing by canal around Muscle Shoals, taking two years to reach this place. As a boy on the Big Sandy in Pike County, he remembered the election of Garfield, who had campaigned there in the war, and the number of perfectly good mountaineers who had been shot up or cut up at the time, by reason of their drinking perfectly good moonshine liquor.

His home inside the fort was a box cabin with crimson

ramblers over it, peach trees around it, a potato patch in the rear, a kitchen garden at one side, and a thrifty stretch of sweet corn in front; from a pear tree hung a scythe, possibly beaten from a sword. Sole tenant and in a sense custodian of the ancient fortification, Ben had a tale to tell so grateful to local pride that people wanted to believe it: when Woodrow Wilson was in Paris to negotiate the peace, he asked Europe what was the point in great armaments when one old man, crippled with rheumatism, could hold Fort Henry!

"Of course," Ben explained, "he didn't say it; but it makes a grand story."

Save that the group of men and women at the landing did not wear sabots, the scene might have been a fishing village near the mouth of a tidal river in northern France. A fleet of curious flatbottoms, with what seemed to be trellised arbors upon them, lay near the bank. These were fishing boats, with racks from which hung mussel rakes or brails—lengths of gas pipe to which short ropes were attached, each ending in a turkey-foot cluster of hooks, unbarbed and homemade from fence wire; to catch mussels you lower the rake until it scrapes the river bottom, and you learn at length where the shell beds are. In the background, women were tending mussel fires. In the foreground was a gasoline ferryboat with a straw-hatted, barefoot mate just coming in from the other landing on the Kentucky shore four miles below. One of the oldest ferries on the river, it remembers days when a blind horse turned the wheel that drove it.

Through the gathering dusk I walked back. The last bluebirds were warbling on the fences, the last chimney swallows circling overhead. In a meadow a rabbit, smitten with midsummer madness, leaped as high as a deer.

Still a mockingbird was descanting; sometimes, when the moon is full, he spends the livelong night in song, perhaps to study and rehearse the notes of nocturnal fowls—the boding owl, the mournful goatsucker, the plaintive plover. Round and red as it rose over the horizon behind me, the moon grew golden as it climbed the sky, and its soft light enveloped the dwelling where I slept.

I had breakfast and was back at the fort by sunrise. Three women, two of them seasoned matrons, the third a pretty girl with dark, well-set eyes, were already cooking mollusks at the fishers' camp. Each man's store of shells was in its own pile and was boiled separately. A trench had been dug in the bank, a fire of driftwood was in it, a bottomless oil drum was the smokestack. The shells were sorted in four qualities, the large, purple ones, big as the rock clams you find along the seashore, selling for five dollars a ton, and the small white and purple ones for as much as twenty-five dollars. Their flesh is fed to hogs and used as fish bait. The boiling is to separate it from the shells, and is said not to damage the fresh-water pearls now and then found in them. Shells are shipped in barges down the Tennessee to the button factories at Paducah and elsewhere.

When the *Cordella* came in from Red Bank, four miles above, I went aboard, and with a pole helped shove it away from the bank. I was on a gasoline boat perhaps sixty feet long, with a small cabin and office on its main deck, a pilothouse above. In the cabin was a notice that meals would be served for thirty-five cents and that persons interested should tell the cook. Another sign said that anybody shipping animals would be carried free but would be expected to look out for the welfare of his stock. There were also a radio, two chairs, a brassbound water

cask, and the *Ladies' Birthday Almanac*. We had one female passenger, a matronly figure, and half a dozen males, including a lad of eighteen who had never been a dozen miles from home nor seen a railroad train; he dreamed of exploring the wonders of St. Louis when he had made travel money at Paducah.

We descended the Tennessee along the left bank to keep out of the wind. The river flowed swiftly and smoothly, rose perceptibly during the day, and slowed up in the afternoon as the influence of flood water on the Ohio, passing at Paducah and acting as a kind of moving dam there, crept back along the great tributary. Flowing between green shores, with here and there a bluff of consequence, the Tennessee seemed about as wide as the greater stream which receives it. On the seventy-mile journey from Fort Henry down, we passed sixty landings, and the largest town had only six hundred inhabitants. Our business with the banks was mainly in fowls and animals. At one landing we took on a calf and four crates of broilers, at another a white cow and a dozen pigs, and then more cows and calves, hundreds of chickens, plenty of eggs, some cream.

My deck chair was an empty apple-box. Sometimes I helped carry on the chickens, or encouraged a hesitant cow up the gangplank, or went ashore at landings and sought the shade of a sycamore. I missed out on a meal, for the cook was attending a newborn grandchild, and had not come aboard. With the captain I cut willow branches to shade the broilers from the broiling sun, and with a willow switch I fanned flies from the flanks of a cow tied too short for her to whisk them away with her head. I was glad to see that one passenger took pains to water his pigs from a cask, and feed them on corn still

in the husk. Hungrily I watched a boatman break and suck half a dozen raw eggs.

The captain was a socialist and a good deal of a philosopher, had a bullet in his body received in one of those neighborhood debates as to choice of schoolteachers, and enriched my vocabulary with the decorous Tennessee phrase "a military wedding," which is a wedding enforced by a shotgun in the hands of the bride's father. In place of a steamboat whistle there was a small tin horn, two-toned as the law requires, which the skipper sounded as we neared the landings; also he had a battered brass bugle, of the kind raftsmen used in old days on the Ohio. There was merely a decent living in the boat, he said, and certainly his were modest freight charges—fifty cents to carry a calf clear across the toe of Kentucky. As a neighborhood service, he did shopping errands in Paducah for folk up the river, and on some trips as much as a thousand dollars was entrusted to him. Word had reached Red Bank the night before, he said, that a revenue officer—myself—was at Fort Henry; but to travelers in Secluded America that is an old story, and negligible.

Here and there on either bank was the smoke of mussel camps, and often there were fishing boats in sight. Fishing is called shelling, of another sort than the Tennessee knew when gunboats guarded it. There are perhaps five hundred shellboats on the river from Fort Henry down. We saw a barge which may have had fifty tons of shells upon it. I was told that mussels were not bad eating, with an oyster taste when taken raw, but were rather tough. Pearls? You could get them from a sheller for twenty-five cents apiece, but the skipper had seen one worth fifty dollars.

The fact is that they are of higher worth than most

rivermen realize. Indians knew better, and bushels of discolored pearls have been found in the Ohio mounds. Nowadays, many have been marketed as orientals. As much as twenty-five thousand dollars has been paid for one.

All the way down from the Kentucky line, we had on our port side a region apart, an island, or rather a peninsula, of the Old South thrust into Kentucky, with the Tennessee, Ohio, and Mississippi rivers bounding it, isolating it, and molding its life. The Jackson Purchase, comprising eight counties and nearly twenty-four hundred square miles, was bought from the Chickasaws in 1818; it was settled entirely from the South. It raises cotton as well as dark tobacco, white corn, and red hogs. Sweet potatoes, sorghum, and kaffir corn are other crops. There are more mules than horses. Goats take the place of sheep. Pecan trees grow wild in the creek bottoms, and cane thickets flourish there, along with pawpaws, persimmons, and sassafras. There are levees and sloughs, and a bayou or two with old French names. The dirt ways of a humid land make long journeys so tedious that every few miles there is a village or crossroads store—more than a hundred and fifty within the narrow confines of the Purchase. People go about in skiffs in high water, and float logs down the creeks. On land everybody rides a horse or a mule.

This land has provinces of its own—the Barrens, the Big Bottoms, the Second Bottom, the Breaks of the Tennessee, the Cane Hills, the Flatwoods, Sassafras Ridge, the Oak and Hickory hills. As Mountain Kentucky calls an upland valley a cove, so the Purchase calls a ravine a gulf. It has recollections of a prairie past, when grass as high as the head of a man on horseback covered the

Barrens; there were no trees save along the creeks, and under them grew wild rye with long beards which afflicted the eyes of cattle. After the Chickasaws left and white men came in, trees sprang up everywhere. Because much of the land is subject to floods, the log houses are built on stilts or Indian mounds; barns may have entrances on two levels, and sometimes a bridge joins barn and house. A mild climate enables people to go barefoot the year around. They burn only firewood. Foremost among their amusements are so-called public speakings.

The most amazing thing in the history of this region happened before white men lived there. They did live in a town across the Mississippi, and so it is called the New Madrid earthquake, although its major violence was in the Purchase. With a thunderous sound, the bed of the Mississippi was lifted, its waters rolled backward, the bluffs tumbled into the rebellious river, long fissures opened in the earth, hills sank, valleys rose, and wild turkeys fell from their roosts in the forest. New Madrid was laid in ruins, and a number of barges descending the river went down with their crews. Reelfoot Lake, fifty miles long, with its northern shores in Kentucky, appeared from nowhere. This was in December, 1811. For years afterward, says N. P. Willis, every Kentucky family "had a key suspended over the Bible on the mantelpiece, to know by its vibrations when to fall on their knees and pray."

On our right bank as we went down through Kentucky was the interfluvial domain known as In-between-the-Rivers. The Cumberland and Tennessee, neighbors when they issue from the Eastern mountains, draw far apart as they flow westward; but they draw together again as they turn northward into Kentucky, moving side by



side and never more than eight or ten miles apart until they enter the Ohio. At Grand Rivers these great tributary waterways are within four miles of each other. An area of some five hundred square miles, lying in three counties, is well-nigh surrounded by water. It has a scanty agricultural population, a few hamlets, no towns at all. There was once a charcoal iron industry, but now much of the country is going back to forest. Deer and wild turkeys rove there under the protection of the commonwealth.

By sundown we reached Paducah and the river's mouth. I noted a showboat in the Duck's Nest, a government dredgeboat at the levee, and a huge wharfboat, relic of the time when such craft had two stories and served as hotels to lodge and feed travelers awaiting the steamboats. Climbing the hill, I began the little epilogue with which a river journey always closes—the shift from water and willows to streets and buildings, a kindred shift of the spirit. I still wore the sugarloaf harvest hat I had obtained in the Tennessee wilderness, and carried only a small haversack. My headgear won the admiration of a lounging Negro. "Ah shuah lak yo' summah hat, cunnel," he ventured. "It's yours," I said, handing it to him, and fishing a cap out of my pocket. Arriving from unexpected places, coming from old steamboat landings which cabs no longer serve, traversing ancient streets, and presenting myself before hotel clerks, I have remarked at other times—as at Paducah—some evidence of surprise as it was mentally noted that no trains had come in, that I had no car, and there was dried river mud, and not dust, on my feet.

After supper I attended a revue by a small company which was making the river towns, and beheld a harem

scene in which a number of shapely young women sang very badly. The next morning, I induced Captain Bell on the government dredgeboat *Howard*, Memphis bound, to give me a lift to Cairo, three hours down the Ohio. Over nine-o'clock coffee, and at the noonday lunch, the officers chatted, explaining that the Ohio's banks were of clay and seldom caved in, while the Mississippi's were of sand and sandy loam, where anything could happen. The bluff at Fort Pillow, for example, was always sliding, and threatening a major incident. Whenever they went by, they went warily, for should it let go, the swell would drive the boat to the other shore and wreck it there. One officer told how a dead swell from a slide beyond the horizon had struck his boat without warning and with staggering force.

These army engineers had something interesting to report about the towboats which the steel corporations send down the rivers, pushing laden barges before them. They are fitted out like first-class hotels; coffee is served between meals, and there are appetizing midnight snacks. On the towboats, the old, elegant days of the side-wheel packets have come back to life.

At the Cairo landing, I boarded a ferryboat and went down the Ohio a mile or so to its mouth, and then up the Mississippi a like distance. We passed the government towboat *Iowa* of the Inland Waterways Corporation, which was entering Cairo harbor with a string of loaded barges; a great, gray craft, oil-burning, and with a stern wheel that may have been forty feet across, it looked like a battleship of the second class. These boats take a good deal of wheat and cotton down to New Orleans and bring back sugar and coffee.

The little settlement of Birds Point, half afloat on the

Missouri side, was the end of a summer's voyaging. Using seven boats, and detouring up the Green and down the Tennessee, I had descended the Ohio from its upper reaches to its mouth. My feet were on the western shore of the Father of Waters.

Tributaries of the Beautiful River, most of them, were still unknown, and beckoned to farther adventure. A year later I answered the call.

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## *VI. Under Mountain Ramparts*

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FROM MIDNIGHT UNTIL MORNING OUR BOAT SWUNG AT the threshold of the Mountain State. Waking for a moment in the small hours, I could hear the hull chafing against a wharf, and amid the lapping of water outside, a subdued grunting which came from our lower deck. "*Cochons*," I muttered, but not in scorn, and turning over was asleep again. I could have called them swine, but I knew they must have come aboard at the City of the French, four miles down on the other side of the Ohio. The last remark which I made to myself when I went to bed was the familiar one that the French were a frivolous people fond of light wines and dancing. They were galloping late and making a Sunday of it, these citizens of Gallipolis. Taking the downbound boat, they had met and boarded us in the afternoon as we came upstream from Cincinnati on our way to Charleston and the Great Kanawha. They danced quadrilles, and made a gay tumult around the piano in the lower end of the long cabin.

I was asleep when they went ashore at Gallipolis, and so saw nothing of their town. But on another river trip I spent half a day there, and because it lies so near the

mouth of the Kanawha and is so intimately associated with the story of navigation on the River of the Woods and has so quaint a history, it requires a word here. Frenchmen who wanted to escape their Revolution settled it in 1791. D'Hebecourt, their first postmaster, was a schoolmate of Napoleon, and the story is that Napoleon planned to follow him. Other French settlements in the United States, most of which I have visited, were formed by soldiers, traders, trappers, adventurers, and peasants, who made themselves at home in the wilderness, went half native, and evolved a half-breed progeny. The Gallipolitans were folk from Paris and Lyons, small tradesmen, artisans, artists, their numbers including carvers, gilders, coachmakers, watchmakers, hairdressers. There were five hundred of them. They had a dance on the night of their arrival, and twice a week thereafter, and they danced well.

What they could not do was to swing an axe or raise corn, and to live in the wilderness men had to do both. Their cabins and stockade were built for them by frontiersmen before they came. When the French settlers wanted to cut down a tree, half a dozen men would hack at the trunk while a larger number pulled away at ropes attached to the branches. Falling, it was likely to flatten out some of its executioners. Did they cut it up into logs, fence rails, and firewood? That was too hard work; so they dug a trench, rolled it in, and buried it. The best things they did were to spear frogs in a neighboring swamp and raise garden vegetables by following directions in books. What was mainly in their favor was their blood; liking Frenchmen wherever they found them, the Indians that raided the Anglo-Saxon settlements let the Gauls alone. But chills and fever took heavy toll, and

after a few discouraged years most of the survivors went down the Ohio and up to St. Louis.

Of the French period there remain two or three cottages, rows of massive elms, perhaps a score of French family names, the memory of Lafayette's visit in 1825 and Louis Philippe's a few years later, and on the site of the old stockade a gracious river park with cannon at the four corners and a fountain with columned peristyle in the classic tradition—a sort of *place d'armes* like that of New Orleans.

When I came on deck Monday morning the fog which had held us prisoner at the mouth of the Kanawha (they pronounce it K'noy) was just lifting. There was time for a walk through the lower part of the ancient town of Point Pleasant before the packet started up the river. I saw the shipyards where steamboats have been built for the South American trade; the site of Forts Randolph and Blair; the hewn-log Mansion House at the Point, which was a tavern back in 1796; the battle monument standing near-by with its statue of a Virginia borderer in hunting shirt, coonskin cap, and leather breeches, and in the courthouse yard a small monument to Cornstalk, leader of the Shawnees at the Battle of Point Pleasant, which was the beginning and practically the end of the obscure colonial campaign of 1774 known as Lord Dunmore's War.

The mist had shifted into the hills and breakfast was on when the *Chris Greene* started up the river with Captain Chris at the wheel. It was more of a river than I had supposed. My interest in it began when I saw two navy boats pass Cincinnati and learned that they had been built in the mountains beside the Kanawha instead of by the sea. I found an ample stream, some six hundred feet

wide in its lower courses, which began as the New River in North Carolina four hundred miles away, and won the name of Kanawha only after it had crossed the western part of Virginia, burst through the Blue Ridge and the Alleghenies, and joined the Gauley River about a hundred miles above Point Pleasant. Ten locks and dams maintain a year-round, six-foot channel from its mouth almost to the junction.

There was a considerable trade upon the river when I made the trip. Packets running to Pittsburgh, to Huntington, and to Cincinnati carried passengers, dairy products, livestock. Towboats and fleets of barges moved coal, gasoline, iron and steel, sand and gravel. In good years tonnage approached two millions with a value a little less than eight million dollars, and perhaps three thousand passengers traveled the stream. Commercial navigation began more than a century ago. A list of packets which plied the river between 1830 and 1909 shows one hundred and seventy-three names. Among the boats were *Blue Ridge*, *Catawba*, and *Cumberland Valley*; *Market Boy*, *Mountain Boy*, *Kanawha Belle*, *Mountaineer*, and *Mountain Home*; *Clara*, *Eliza*, and *Annie Laurie*; *Evergreen* and *Laurel*, *Active*, *Effort*, *Liberty*, *Justice*, *Freedom*, *Hope*, and *Triumph*; *Lame Duck*, *Wild Goose*, *Katydid*, *Snake Hunter*, *Trout*, and *Wasp*.

Our boat moved upstream at a pace satisfying to anyone who would forget for a while the ways of America awheel. Most of the landings were just front doors to somebody's farm. A few derived from ancient feuds which made neighbors unwilling to use a common water gate. One of these mountain quarrels had a summary ending at a woman's hands.

As the story was told me, a tall, buxom, blackhaired

country girl secured a place as waitress at an eating house frequented by railroad-and-river men. Obliging, well-spoken, and a hustler at mealtimes, she was popular with the men. Often her gaze was turned to the door, and every newcomer seemed to interest her. After a month had passed, a large man with a broad hat and heavy cane came in, hung up hat and coat, put the club in a corner, and sat down at a table. Here he may be called Jones. The mountain girl eyed him closely, and then approached.

"Excuse me," she said, "but wouldn't you be Mr. Jones?"

"That's my name," was the reply.

The girl gathered up some dishes from another table and took them into the kitchen. When she came back she carried a heavy, long-handled iron skillet under her apron. At the same moment she spoke and struck. "You killed my pappy back in the hills fifteen years ago," she said, as the skillet descended. Not then, nor ever after, did the man say a word. In fact, they buried him, and nothing much was done about it. It was told abroad that the young woman had taken some sort of pledge not to shed blood, and had she not kept it?

"She married well and raised one of the sweetest families in town," concluded my informant.

The valley up which we were going south by east was one of the great travel routes of the Old West. Down it, along the New and the Kanawha in 1784 and thereafter, came Scotch-Irish borderers from North Carolina and the Valley of Virginia. Sore at heart when his land titles in Kentucky were disputed, Daniel Boone came hither to live for four years near Point Pleasant, and then to shake the dust of American soil from his moc-casined feet, and go on to Spanish Missouri, where lands



and honors awaited him. Washington surveyed and owned considerable tracts near the mouth of the Kanawha. In stagecoach days, statesmen of the West followed the Kanawha-James route to and from tidewater. They broke their journey at the healing waters of White Sulphur Springs. From the second decade of the nineteenth century on, it was the resort of fashion.

The making of salt was once the great industry of the Kanawha region. Buffalo trails guided salt-boilers to the licks, and at length a hundred or more wood-burning furnaces filled the valley with their pungent smoke. Timothy Flint called these "the most extensive salines in the western country." There was an active market in Cincinnati and other river towns where the nation's meat was packed. Barrels of salt went down the Kanawha and Ohio in flatboats and steamboats, and what the packing houses could not use was sold to merchants along the lower tributaries of the Ohio and along the Mississippi.

Slowly we went up from lock to lock into the interior of a state the mean elevation of which is highest of any east of the Mississippi. The ranges between which the stream drove its course—Ohio Ridge, Kanawha Ridge, Buffalo Ridge, Dogwood Ridge—were rather inferred than discerned. In the foreground were the willows and poplars, sandbars where ducks gossiped, mouths of sluggish creeks that reached the rivers by clandestine ways. Before each farm was a skiff or punt. Women were fishing in the shade of the shore elms and one of them held up a three-foot catfish as we passed. Naked lads swung out over the river on long strands of wild grapevines. White were the blooming elderbushes and potato patches. From shore to shore the cocks challenged each other in

a feud that could never come to close quarters, and was therefore an ideal form of warfare.

This was the showboat season. Moored at various places we passed the *Brighton Medicine Boat*, the *Temple of Health*, *Bart's Fun Show*, *Cotton Blossom* and *Peerless*; the actors were fishing, or reading, or reclining in hammocks on the deck in what seems to be an existence bereft of care.

There was an old country physician aboard, and the sight of the medicine boat drew from him a disquisition on the pharmacopoeia of the border, which is largely that of the mountains today. The chief afflictions of borderfolk were rheumatism, wounds, including snakebite; fevers, and disorders of the intestinal tract. For all these they used raw whiskey, the universal false medicine of the Old West, and in whiskey they also steeped healing herbs, as medical science does to this day. Skunk grease, red-worm oil, oil of wintergreen, arbutus, white pine cones, magnolia twigs, sassafras and hickory bark were cures for rheumatism. Of slippery elm bark, sassafras or violet leaves, healing dressings were made for wounds. For snakebite people used purple bindweed, goldenrod, devil's bit. As a substitute for Peruvian bark in the treatment of "chills and fever" they used wild sage tea, golden seal, Indian turnip, spicewood, the berries of the prickly ash, the cones of the cucumber tree, and the bark of the catalpa, small magnolia, willow, and dogwood. The pulp of honey locust pods is a gentle laxative. Bloodroot is an emetic. Peeled upward, butternut bark is alleged to be a strong emetic; peeled downward, a strong cathartic.

In mountain coves far from the county-seat doctor's office, these remedies are still accounted good.

The noon meal was a substantial repast with pork ten-

derloin, mashed potatoes, biscuit, green onions, and radishes as its major items. By midafternoon I was hungry again—the river air makes for appetite—and was glad to join the cook and some officers in coffee, crackers, and conversation in the cookhouse. They told me that deck passengers were still carried on river boats. A low rate was charged and they were neither bedded nor fed; but the space allotted them could not be encroached upon by the cargo. They told me also about the Frog Hunters of the Kanawha, who row along the banks at night with flashlights, or miners' lamps in their caps. The green dazzle in the eyes of the bullfrogs locates them, and you reach out and take them in with your hands. To match the so-called Colonels of Kentucky, they have Majors in West Virginia; they become such by killing a rattlesnake.

Of all incidents of our loading and unloading, the shipment of fourteen black swine made the greatest commotion. We halted before a great plateau-farm with a good brick dwelling standing back among pine trees. The roustabouts built a fence-paneled runway from the boat to the bank pen. With the admirable protective stubbornness of their kind, its occupants declined an exit, piling up in the far corner of the enclosure. Their leader was hauled squealing down the landing stage. Others were pushed, and practically coasted aboard. When a stray rebel scrambled under the runway fence and dashed away, a deck hand sprang upon him, and rode him a moment before sliding off amid the hilarious shouts of his mates; it took four men to bring in the fugitive. After all had been embarked, the roustabouts gathered around them, discussing among other things their swinish behavior, the relative merits of pork chops and spare ribs, and the wherefore of the quirk in a pig's tail.

"Niggah," these men called each other—an accost not to be used by the outsider. They romped a good deal at their labors, and at other times they diced or dozed. Among them were characters known as "Slow and Easy," "Jump Steady," and "Cuckoo." On another trip, I was told, a roving Negro preacher of powerful frame had shipped with them. Night and day, from a soapbox on the lower deck, he exhorted them to lead righteous lives and not filch fruit in transit. Twanging his banjo, he conducted them in singing spirituals until they shaped up into a satisfying chorus. At the landings rousters used to tax his strength and temper by climbing on his shoulders as he came back from the trips ashore. They desisted when he flashed a razor.

Their friends were on hand when we reached Charleston at the day's end. Among them were two young women. The slighter of the twain, a puckish creature with evolute lips, was cutting high jinks in the wharf-boat, prancing, cakewalking, kneeling in with exaggerated limberness, her scanty skirts lifted high enough to disclose a generous span of tawny leg above the gaudy garters. The levee is the Negro's slanting playground, a cobbled forum, and at times the shrine of Africa.

Charleston, where I spent the night, is a hill-girt city, with a stately Capitol on the river bank, a downtown waterfront to which the many-porched buildings give an Old World air, and along the Kanawha a noble avenue with white-columned Colonial mansions under its elms. Across the stream are shipyards which build both sea and river boats. The atmosphere of history is upon the town, the sense of statehood, of independent destinies, of a culture slowly evolved within the boundary framework of ranges and rivers.

One of the earliest pictures of the western Virginians is that of Timothy Flint, who describes them as tall, muscular, laborious, frugal in their habits, and with manners that related them more to New England than to tidewater Virginia. "In the dialect of the country," he says, "the people west of the mountains are called 'Cohoes' and those east of the mountains 'Tuckahoes.'" These are the names of New York towns. How did they get into the South?

That there was a difference between the peoples of the two Virginias was evident from the beginning. As far back as the Revolution, the settlements beyond the Alleghenies wanted to be set off into a state on the ground that the mountains were an impassable barrier to political union. In the Civil War they refused to follow Virginia into the Confederacy, seceded from secession, aided McClellan in expelling the Southern columns, and won admission into the Union. Virginia seemed to be losing only a wild, broken upland region inhospitable to agriculture, but subsequent discoveries of coal, petroleum, and natural gas disclosed how richly the new commonwealth was dowered.

I had come sixty miles into the state, which was as far as the packets go. To reach its heart I must travel on. I went up the valley by bus forty miles until I came to the Falls of the Kanawha, and beyond that to the point where the Gauley mingles its dark, forest-born current with the turbid torrent of New River. Thence we climbed sharply beside the gorge of New until we were in a mountain land. Harriet Martineau, who had been there long before me, found the ascent trying to her nerves. The Hawk's Nest moved her, she confessed, almost as much as Niagara. Leaning from the rocky platform far above

the valley, with the purple peaks swimming about her, "I saw more," she said, "than the world has in reserve to show me."

Perhaps I saw even more than she, wild and striking though I found the view that enthralled her, for I left the canyon side and followed an old road into the hills until the crow of cocks seemed to come up from another world. Mountains of vision were around me, mist in their valleys, haze on their summits, and all immersed in blue as the ranges rolled to a horizon without habitation.

"Quite a scope," the innkeeper down below named it when I came back. Sometimes, he said, wild turkeys wandered in to be fed. He had seen a black bear. A lynx had been trapped the year before. There was a bobcat in a cage. A printed warning counseled travelers not to annoy the captive, because it made him ill just to look at them. I was charmed when the wild creature arched his tawny back at me and purred.

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## *VII. Beside Boundary Waters*

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ON MY WAY UP A MOUNTAIN I SAW THE NEARLY EXTINCT village of Donkey. This was on the Virginia side whither I had come from the Kanawha country. Had it been in Kentucky, on the other side of the ridge, where a more vital idiom is used, I reflected that they would have named it Jackass; a state that does not cavil at Marrowbone, Rabbit Hash, and Greasy Creek would think well of Jackass. Farther along was Horse Gap. What I saw was cows sauntering back from milking, a log springhouse where their milk was cooled in crocks. At the summit of the pass, which is nearly half a mile above the sea, we paused and looked around on dim mountain peaks swathed in twilight mists and down on the lights of a town.

Below was the valley of Big Sandy, and we were at the boundary line between the Old Dominion and its daughter commonwealth, and we were crossing the Cumberlands, and this was Pound Gap. They call it a wind gap because water no longer flows through it. Like all mountain passes, it has been a highroad of decisions. Five rivers—the Licking, the Cumberland, the Kentucky, and the Big and Little Sandy—head near it. East and west

from it ran the Indian trails. Shawnees and Cherokees knew it too well, and raided through it to the white settlements on Holston and Clinch. Pioneers came over it from the Great Valley of one state to the Great Meadow of another. When they drove cattle to the Eastern markets, often they followed the pass. Sounding Gap they named it, since the rocks seemed to be hollow; the name was corrupted in the easy pioneer fashion.

Never was a pass without a battle memory. In the Civil War, Confederate columns swept through the gap on raids in the Big Sandy valley. They entered a hostile country, for everywhere in the South the limestone areas were in rebellion, the sandstone areas loyal to the Union—and Big Sandy is rightly named. Their last attempt was under John Morgan; he was in headlong flight a few days later, dead a few months later.

In the town at the foot of the gap I spent the night. In the morning I took a train to Elkhorn City, following Elkhorn Creek and then another watercourse which the natives called a prong of Sandy.

There was in the car a man with a large gourd out of which he said he would make a water bowl, and there was a woman in a black sunbonnet carrying two pans of eggs. Other women in pink, blue, faded purple, and mauve sunbonnets, barefoot of course, were washing clothes along the creek; their kettles stood over wood fires on the sand bars, and they scrubbed things under sycamores on the bank. Valley girls were sunning their bare knees on porches; that is, the Scotch in them. Black swine strode over the bottoms; they really stride in that part of Kentucky. The hills opened up in short, fertile valleys and revealed other hills behind them where the upland valleys are called coves and raise very good corn. When we



reached the prong of Sandy there were stretches of sunlit water, where dun cattle stood belly-deep in bank shadows, and men fished in punts, and a girl dreamed in a skiff under the elms.

So I came to Elkhorn City. A small, rambling town with a lumberjack past, its claim to fame is that it is in Pike County and a threshold to the Breaks of Sandy. Any county named after Zebulon Pike, explorer of the American Southwest and—possibly—advance agent of Aaron Burr, is worthy a visit, for there is a theory that by virtue of the name it is a permanent and contented province of the oxcart age. There are at least ten such counties. I looked them up in an ancient encyclopedia. All seemed to be hilly. One had about fourteen hundred "working oxen."

At the hotel dinner table at Elkhorn City I said I was going to the Breaks of Sandy. The landlord told me to wait until later in the day, and he would go along. A storekeeper downstreet advised against the trip, but gave no reason why. When the railroad agent said there would be no trains through the Breaks until the next day, I said I would make the journey afoot.

"Better not go through the tunnels," he said.

"Why not?" I replied. "With no more trains running today, where's the danger?"

"Suit yourself," said the agent, and shrugged his shoulders. So, as I recalled, had the other men.

Three women who had overheard the conversation accosted me. No sober person, they said, ever came to grief on this trip. Sunday-night tunnel parties with moonshine and cards were quite another matter. One of the three had often gone through the Breaks to visit friends, and had even "laid out" at night in the summer woods.

Two of them were going up to fish on the following morning. That they did no shoulder-shrugging had made a hit with me. I set out at once.

Nothing happened in a ten-mile walk to recall the colloquy, except that a large, handsome woman, barefoot, yet wearing a black silk dress and smoking a cigarette, took the road behind me as I neared a tunnel. While I pondered slackening my pace and lighting her through, she turned off into the hills.

There were three tunnels—Pool, State Line, and The Towers. All were long, and one had an elbow, and they were black as Erebus. I had a walking stick, a newspaper, and a box of matches. Twisting one sheet of newspaper after another, I lit them for torches, and with the stick trailing along the rails guided myself into daylight. Between the tunnels were 'sunny stretches where I saw groundhogs. Below me the river steadily gained voice.

The Breaks of Sandy have a haunting name, and to see them I had come a long way. In crossing the state line from Virginia, the river breaks through Pine Mountain. Its gorge in places is a thousand feet deep. The pinnacles, known as The Towers, that command the far end, are about sixteen hundred feet high. There are natural stone gates also at the lower end. The solemn roar of the river filled my ears as I followed the deep chasm. With every rod almost, it plunged over a shelf or raced down an incline, to lie for a moment in a still, foam-flecked pool, and then to drop again. This was a painted gorge, its walls gray, ocher, vaguely purple, verde antique, poster yellow. The cliffs rose in bastion formation, and here and there they simulated the sculptured shapes of men and animals. Though little known,

there may be nothing like this mountain-guarded stretch of rebellious river anywhere in the East.

When at table that night I told the landlord I had gone alone to the Breaks, he looked grave.

"You shouldn't have done that," he said, but said no more.

It was such a supper as a country walk turns into a feast—Kentucky ham, new string beans, green onions, light biscuit, light mountain butter churned a few minutes before, quince jelly, honey, apple pie, and innumerable glasses of fresh buttermilk. Afterward I sat out under the stars with a group of railroad men, clients of the hotel, and listened to some Boccaccian tales of the road. The conversation changed when two pretty girls who worked in the hotel joined us. One of the later stories was of seven hens which had a seventy-mile ride on the brake-beams of a freight train and then were taken into the caboose.

Before bedtime I walked over the town with a miner. He said that there were jack salmon, wall-eyed pike, and suckers in Sandy, and that in low water people caught them with their hands, or shot them, or killed them with hayforks. The dark was alive with the chanting of tree frogs; these, he said, were not to be confounded with "the fish frogs which we eat, or the whistling toads." Through my sleep that night I could hear also the agreeable pastoral sound of grass torn up by grazing cattle. Later, but very early, a fanfare of cockcrows ran around the hills. A hen cackled over the day's first egg. There was a knock at the door, and a voice said "Six o'clock." At breakfast I may have had that egg. There were fried apples, of course, immemorial morning dish of Kentucky. Did the Indians fry crabapples?

I went down to the river to inspect a jo-boat, the characteristic craft of Big Sandy; elsewhere it would be called a punt. To build one you take two boards an inch thick, fourteen inches wide, and twenty feet long, saw a triangular piece off each end and fashion an oblong frame by connecting the ends with crosspieces thirty inches long. This you turn upside down, and when you have covered the bottom with similar crosspieces, reversed it again, and added another midway of the frame for a third seat, all you need is a six-foot pole for pushing and a tomato can to bail with.

Pausing on a bridge over the river, I recalled that people—the older American poets, anyway—mused when they reached the middle of a bridge. Though the currents of life seem more interesting than the backwaters of meditation, here was example to be followed. I mused on the reflection of a church steeple upside down in a pool. A darkhaired woman leading a saddle mule crossed the bridge afoot, and I wondered why she was not riding. Boys with bait cans cast their lines from a ledge, and I wondered whether they would catch anything. A black calf sauntered down to the river to drink, and I wondered if black heifers were as comfortable as white cows in hot weather.

About the seeming mystery of the Breaks of Sandy I did not think a second time until I reached Pikeville, the county-seat town. There I was told that, at intervals over a number of weeks a short time before, seven persons had been found dead in the tunnels; a number of men suspected of knowing too much about it were already in jail. Whether the persons deceased had been killed, or merely rendered helpless with liquor, before a train came along was not made clear. I recalled that on my walk I

had passed a sort of jungle of cabinfolk who, rightly or wrongly, had a rather lawless name, and that in town somebody had said I was on a still hunt. Yet I think the women who had urged the matter on me meant good and not ill.

On my ride to Pikeville and thence down the valley, the Big Sandy country opened out its fertile bottom stretches, but hid behind a double mountain screen its more characteristic life. A few place names, set down rather at random, suggest the savor of secluded cove settlements and creek hamlets: Bear Wallow, Beetle, Big Elk, Big Hurricane, Big Laurel, Brandy Keg, Calf Creek, Cow Creek, Cow Pen, Lonesome Ridge, Mare Creek, Old Licks, Peach Creek, Pewee Valley, Pigeon, Redbush, Red Jacket, Sugar Loaf, Summit Gap, White House, Widow Preston Shoal. As I learn from the valley newspapers, the farmers take big yields of sweet potatoes from the sandy soil, cultivate patches of tobacco, make a good deal of sorghum, gather walnuts for the market, butcher hogs for domestic use, sell their cattle to roving traders, and ship out logs on the spring tides. They hunt small fur-bearing animals, wild honey, yellowroot, and ginseng. There is too much shooting, particularly among in-laws and third cousins.

Big Sandy is a boundary river, and on the maps it is only twenty-seven miles long. Not until Tug Fork, where the state line of West Virginia runs, is united with Levisa Fork, which is on the Kentucky side, does it win its proper name, and each of these tributaries is about a hundred and forty miles long. The watershed covers about forty-two hundred square miles. The stream has two beautiful Indian names, Totteroy and Chattaroy, now in disuse, and each means "the river of sand bars." The Indians also

knew it by names that may be translated as Salt Creek, Fire River, Mystery River, and the River of Many Buffalo.

The valley emerges into authentic history from a background of legend. Near the Breaks of Sandy the Shawnees said there was a great cave where they hid their women before they did battle with the Cherokees. In the same region—as well as in a number of others—tradition places Swift's silver mines, the quest of which has never been abandoned. Hither each year, from 1760 to 1769, as report has it, came John Swift and a band of white and red men from tidewater Virginia, and they carried back precious metal. They were associated with a merchant who owned ships on the Spanish seas, and knew the art of engraving dies for the coinage of silver and gold. Jillson, former state geologist of Kentucky and author of an entertaining monograph on the Big Sandy valley, concludes that the merchant was engaged in piratical ventures and that the object of the expeditions was to coin stolen gold and silver into English currency. But why need the conspirators have journeyed so far?

For the products of the valley, mainly timber, salt, corn, and cattle, the river was long the only outlet. During good stages of water in the winter and spring, they went downstream to the Ohio by raft, on flatboats, and in small steamboats. Half a century ago, none of the county-seat towns on the Kentucky side had two hundred inhabitants. The coming of the railroad and the opening of coal mines have given these towns thousands where they had hundreds. Best known are Pikeville, near the head of periodic steamboat navigation, and Catlettsburg, at the river mouth.

At Pikeville I climbed the hills afoot and went on into

a country of blue barns and catbirds and footbridges, where people still play the dulcimer. Now and then I caught the authentic odor of a smokehouse. The shimmering heats of harvest time were on the land—in the sun a fierce beneficence, in the shade an agreeable languor. I could only acclaim the long, tolerant, midsummer noonings of the mountainfolk. They made me welcome on their porches when I asked for water, inquired my name and forgot it, and my objectives which they pondered, and arrived at conclusions perhaps suggested in the reply of one kindly-faced woman.

“Could I take that road yonder?” I asked.

“Yes,” she said gently. “Hit goes into our cornfield.”

For some while I walked in a creek bed, which is the only road in many parts of mountain Kentucky. It followed the easy grades that water makes for itself, up to the summits where the rhododendron grew. The stream was low, and with the aid of a staff and stepping stones I could ford it anywhere. There was no mud and no dust on this secluded highway, shaded with old trees, paved with nature’s own macadam—clean pebbles, damp, closely packed sand, long, smooth slabs of sandstone. I met droves of cattle bound for distant markets, jolt-wagons drawn by tough little mules, men and women on horseback. Nobody was afoot. While a creek road affords good dry-weather walking, when it rains the waters rise swiftly and you need a horse.

Returning from my walk, I went to see a rambling, dilapidated old dwelling in Pikeville, its gallery floors and balustrades in collapse, its fences broken down, its unkempt garden asleep in the shadow of trees. This was the headquarters of James A. Garfield in one of the first campaigns of the Civil War. Obscured by larger events

which followed, the campaign is all but forgotten, and many histories ignore it. Garfield himself is a dimming figure in the national story; short was his stay in the White House before he fell to an assassin's bullet, and was taken to the side of the sea to die within sound of the manifold voices that had called to him as a boy. Yet his Big Sandy expedition is worthy of remembrance, for here, untried in arms yet entrusted with independent command, he did a remarkable thing.

His task was to drive the West Pointer, Humphrey Marshall, and a force of five thousand Confederates out of Eastern Kentucky. In a month he did it. Attacking forces greater than his own and strongly entrenched, he defeated them at Middle Creek, and in a later engagement sent their detachments scurrying back across Pound Gap into Virginia. It was a triumph of audacity. "I didn't know any better," the young commander said long afterward.

In this campaign the river figured in one incident that was characteristic of the man. Troops were short of supplies, the roads deep in mud, Big Sandy in flood. In a skiff with one soldier, Garfield descended from Pikeville to Catlettsburg, found the little steamer *Sandy Valley* there, loaded it with provisions, and ordered the captain and crew to take him back. When they protested that it could not be done, he took the wheel himself and started upstream. It was a wild ride around evil bends and beneath undermined and overhanging trees. On the second night the boat went aground. Garfield and his man scrambled into a skiff, carried a line ashore, warped it around a tree, and pulled it until the boat swung back into the current. On the third day it reached the famished brigade.

I went on down Sandy through a country where people



rode saddle horses, and timothy dust drifted along the wind when the hay was turned, and pink hollyhocks were level with the eaves of cabins, and mules made a preposterous music, and there was a graveyard so high on a sugarloaf hill that it seemed half a translation to heaven to be buried there.

Where the forks of Sandy meet, I spent the night, walking before bedtime over the bridges that span both. The frogs in each river sang to each other and in the hot dark the stars had dim reflections in the water. By daylight both streams had the deep, opaque green of some semiprecious stone, such as they use in seal rings. There were barges on Tug, and a tramp freight boat, like a box car equipped with a stern wheel. This was at the town of Louisa.

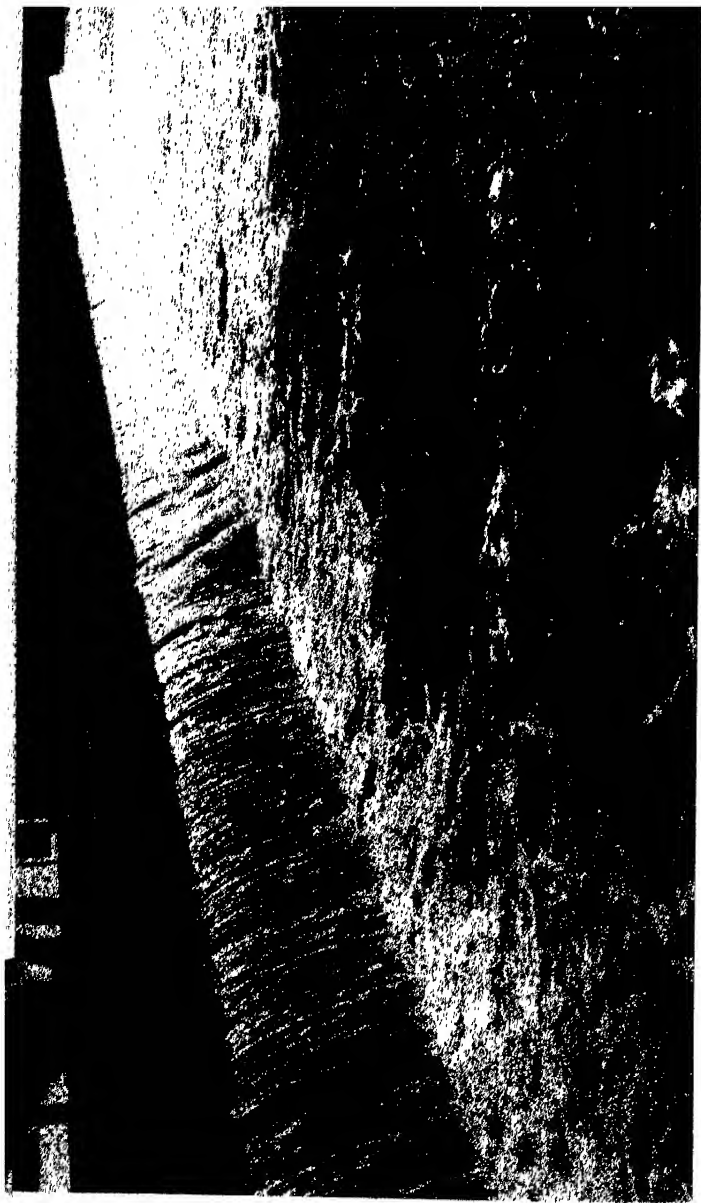
Situate at the forks of the river, and for a time the head of slackwater, the pleasant old county town has witnessed the shifting scenes of Big Sandy navigation. This began with the flatboats. During the Napoleonic campaigns, eight thousand bearskins were collected along Big Sandy and Kanawha and sent downriver to the Ohio, upriver to Pittsburgh, and thence to the seaboard and to Europe; there they were made into hats for grenadiers.

For upriver trade, pushboats were used before the steamboats came, and in low water afterward. These were flatboats about forty feet long, propelled by eight or ten men with poles at their shoulders. Starting at the bow of the boat they walked to the stern while they pushed on the bottom of the river; then they carried the pole back and repeated. A man with a steering oar at the stern and a cook to boil coffee and beans completed the crew. Their boat could make ten or fifteen miles a day upstream, with a load of merchandise and passengers,

A million diamonds gleam in the wake of the churning stern-wheeler.

Paul Briel



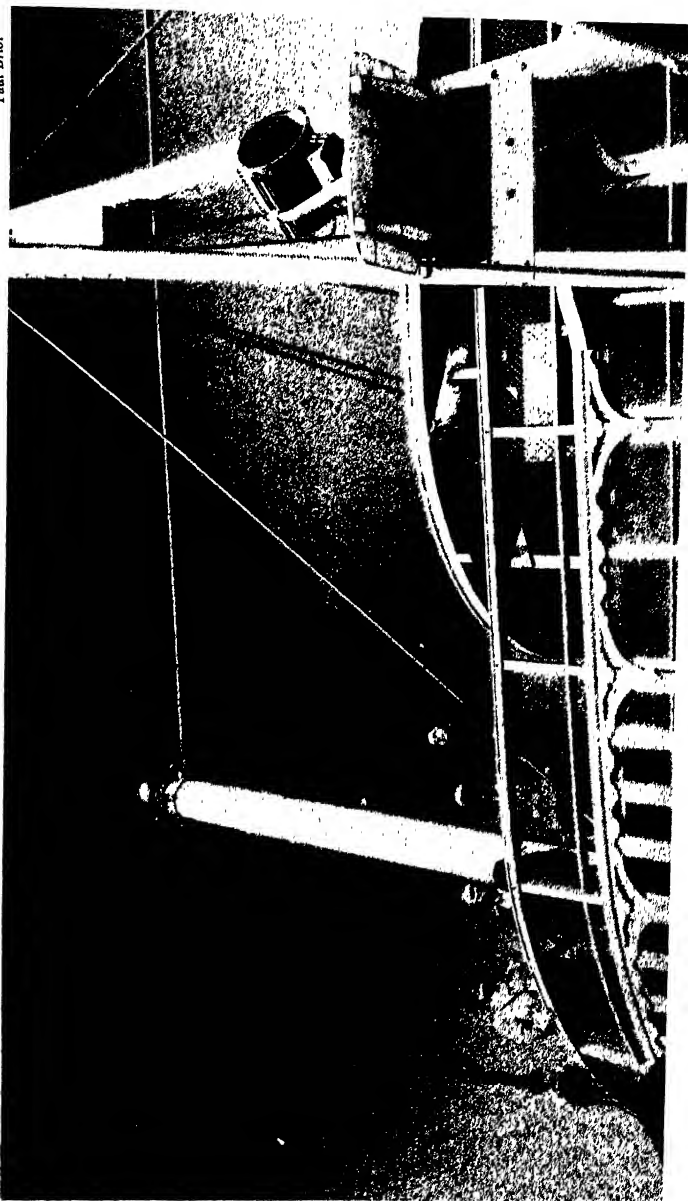


By such dams as this the Ohio River is converted into a series of "pools" to free navigation from its former imprisonment during periods of low water.

Paul Briel

*Port Ahead!* At night these searchlights on the hurricane deck are spotlights, which play along the varied stage of nature on either bank.

Paul Briol





Where the Cumberland makes a little Niagara.



*Tom Greene*

Where New River winds its way in rapids between towering bluffs.



Morten Carlisle

(Above) The limestone cliffs of the Kentucky River stand out stark and white like the chalk cliffs of old England.

Cusick

(Below) Under this covered bridge at Fort Nelson many a weary traveler of olden days has found relief from the mid-day sun.

The hill folk make holiday when one of their women is about to "mistress" her man. This is a wedding procession in the Kentucky mountains.







*Paul Briol*

At rest now, this sturdy wheel will soon push its packet on its majestic way with its never-tiring, slow, steady throbbing.

on eight or ten inches of water. When the water over a shoal was less than this, the crew would get out, stretch a hundred-foot strip of canvas across the bottom of the river back of the boat, and hold it upright with hands and feet, until enough water had collected in their flimsy dam to float the craft some lengths ahead. This was repeated until a pool was reached.

Steamboats have been on the river for more than a century. In high water they went to Pikeville, near the Virginia line, a hundred and fifteen miles from the Ohio. Log rafts and pushboats have descended from points a score of miles above.

As soon as the timber had value, rafting began on Sandy, reaching its height within the half century and thence declining to the minor levels of today. Those were wild days on the river. The raftsmen were hardy, reckless hillmen, and the log fleets came down when the river was running along bankful, or out of bounds. Sometimes at the short bends their strings of timber piled up on the shore and had to be rafted together again. When there was a six- to twelve-foot stage of water at Pikeville the best runs were made. These were smoothly completed when there was also at least a thirty-foot stage in the Ohio at Catlettsburg, for the high water which was passing the Gate City threw Sandy in pool for some miles above its mouth. But if the Ohio was low, with a good deal of current in its tributary, there was danger of the rafts being carried out into the big river. Their crews dreaded this, and might abandon them at the last turn above Catlettsburg and swim ashore, leaving the logs to be rounded up by others. If all went well, the rafts moved down Sandy in thronging fleets, which tied up each night at dark and set forth again at dawn. A big

timber run would crowd the river from Louisa down, and packets had to pick their way. So I learn from Captain Jesse Hughes, who commanded the *Cricket* on those waters.

At Catlettsburg, where the men were paid off, saloons and gambling houses welcomed them. They went back by steamboat. "Many a night," says a former mud clerk, "we pulled out from Catlettsburg with a hundred drunken raft hands fighting among themselves, and with the crew as well, and raced a rival boat all night, with 'a nigger in a swing'—a swing seat hanging on the bar of the safety valve with a husky black upon it." Captain Hughes adds a line: Each raftsman who went aboard would deposit his jug or bottle with the captain, and seek to reclaim it an hour or so later. At breakfast the first morning out, eggs which had been boiled an hour were served to the half-sober passengers, along with thick corn bread, black coffee, and bacon. As each man ate, his back was marked with white chalk lest he return for a second breakfast. Broken bottles, dishes, and windows annotated a quarrelsome meal.

When steamboats came, the smaller rivers in Kentucky and elsewhere had to be prepared for them. Sycamores, undermined by the spring floods, half bridged the rivers. Snags, stumps, rocks, and sandbars also obstructed navigation. Stationary and movable dams to collect the water in long pools, and locks to go around the dams, were in the future. All that the states did was to clear the channels of tree trunks, rocks, and bars, and deepen them here and there by wing dams built out from shore. Then began the unrecorded romance of periodic navigation. During the winter and spring months when water was high, the steamboats ascended little rivers, and trib-

utaries of little rivers, that in these days never see their smoke; they brought commodities, news, and travelers from the outside world to isolated towns where their coming was the event of the year.

Sandy has known both high-water and slack-water navigation. Its steamboats, which bore the paradoxical name of low-water packets, were equally at home in both. Some of them could travel in fourteen inches of water. Locks and dams, built about half a century ago, three on the main river and one on each of its forks, created a six-foot channel to Louisa and thence a dozen miles or so up each fork, broadening the lower river to an average width of a hundred yards and the two tributaries in proportion. In places sandbars have reduced the depth to four feet or less.

Sawlogs, barrel shooks, mine props, crossties, telephone poles, scrap iron, and farm products still come down the river and merchandise goes up, but the main commerce is in oil and gasoline. The last record of passengers carried, which was for 1927, shows only one hundred and eighteen. Let a veteran riverman tell what traffic was but little more than a generation ago:

"It took three days for a round trip to Pikeville and I have seen as high as four boats pull out of Catlettsburg in one evening, all loaded to capacity and having to refuse both passengers and freight. I have gone out on a boat that had cabin accommodations for twelve or fifteen passengers, with more than a hundred names on the cabin register. There were only three or four lights between Catlettsburg and Pikeville, and lots of times they were not burning. Pilots had to know the river like you know your own living room to run full speed at night on the narrow, twisting Sandy against a swift current,

and with oil headlights which would not throw a light ten feet beyond the bow."

Among the scores of packets on the river were the *Guyandotte*, *Red Buck*, *Sandy Valley*, *Vincennes*, *Cricket*, *Alex Yost*, *Maxie Yost*, *Thealka*, *Enquirer*, *Favorite*, *Andy Hatcher*, *Mary Hatcher*, *Jerry Osborne*, *Frank Preston*, *H. M. Stafford*, *Cando*, *Oil Hunter*, *Carbon Black*. The *Cricket* was that rare thing, a single-stack steamboat. Peculiar to the river were the little side-wheelers known as batwings. These were flatboats equipped with steam engines, something like those with which farmers operate threshing machines. There were no wheelhouses, the paddles splashing in full sight on both sides of the boat. The batwings ran only in winter and spring.

My overland journey down Big Sandy ended with the river itself at Catlettsburg. Quiet now, the little port basks in the memory of an ancient wickedness, the consciousness of a contemporary grace. The monument erected by his widow to the memory of a Kentucky judge, "assassinated while in the discharge of his official duties," was set up in the courtyard a good while ago. Its turbulent past was the price the town paid because it stood where rivers meet and took its toll of commerce in a rude time. Before the packets ran and rafts came racing down, Indian trails led to and from the mouth of Sandy, and pioneer roads after them, and great droves of hogs went by, bound for the Falls of Kanawha and the Richmond markets.

Back from the river I found shaded streets and comfortable dwellings. Front Street, which overlooks the Ohio, was a rather ghostly place, with blind windows and blurred signboards that spoke of vanished saloons. There

I took a downstream boat for Cincinnati. Before I boarded it I went over to the lower lock for a last look at Big Sandy. Its journey ended, the tributary river was wide, tranquil, bottlegreen, with spacious backwaters.

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## *VIII. With the Log Fleets*

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THIS SIDE OF THE ROCKIES, ONLY ONE AMERICAN RIVER of any consequence flows westward. That is the Cumberland, which rises in the Kentucky mountains near the Big Sandy and the Virginia line, and in a course of almost seven hundred miles dips down into Tennessee, returns to Kentucky, and enters the Ohio above Cairo in about the same latitude as its highland source. Because it flows as it does, the romance of the border is heavy on its waters. In the strife of states, tremendous battles were fought upon its banks and those of the small rivers entering it. Since then it seems to have withdrawn itself, and the memory of the great things it had witnessed, into the shade of the wooded hills through which it wanders westward.

When I came upon it one day, in the heart of the Kentucky mountains, and to my amazement saw three stern-wheelers lying there, I resolved to board one and go as far as it would take me into the South, and into the past.

I knew enough about the river to want to know more. From the Tennessee Capitol at Nashville, I had noted its silver progress through the plain. On the way to

Cumberland Gap, where Kentucky meets Virginia and Tennessee, I had ridden along its banks for many miles. At Pineville, I turned aside and went through the gorges for forty miles, up into a hill region where it had only the estate of a creek. Twice I had been at Cumberland Falls in the wild lands of Eastern Kentucky where the growing stream wreathes itself in mists and plunges over a precipice—save Niagara, the amplest cataract of the East. It was time to strike up a more intimate acquaintance.

Before going aboard at Burnside, I looked over the little Kentucky town. It sprawls along hillsides, from the farther reaches of which came the chime of cowbells. Dogwood and redbud were abloom in the thickets; orchards had not quite spent the fragrance of apple-blossoms; crows were cawing overhead; the clatter of mule hoofs was on the wooden bridge—a typical picture of springtime in Mountain Kentucky. I saw the bluff, dominating the Cumberland, which had been fortified in the Civil War, and the venerable frame house which for a little while was the headquarters of Ambrose E. Burnside on his historic march to succor the loyal mountain-folk of Eastern Tennessee.

My boat was the *Celina*, a stern-wheeler with a twenty-four-foot beam, a length over all of about one hundred and fifty feet and a carrying capacity of two hundred and thirty tons. Traveling light, it needed but two feet of water under it. With our cargo it drew three and a half feet. I watched this going aboard; little cars took it down a steep incline from the warehouse to the landing, where white roustabouts transferred it to the steamer. Going downstream the boat carried general merchandise with one or two blooded bulls and boars to improve the



breed of Cumberland livestock. On return trips it carried the products of farm and forest to the railroad at Burnside whence they reached city markets. These included hogsheads of tobacco, beef cattle, poultry, and eggs—as many as six hundred coops of chickens and three thousand cases of eggs on a single trip. Pigs were the largest item in the river stock trade, most of them going to Cincinnati, the remainder to Pittsburgh and Richmond. The Cumberland forests sent out neckyokes for Canada; red cedar for lead pencils and clothing chests; oak, poplar, chestnut, ash, and beech logs for the veneer works at Burnside, and a quantity of white-oak barrel staves.

The sun was low in the west when we headed downstream. I had a last glimpse of villagers dipping drinking water from the river, of men on horseback crossing the two ferries, of a waterfall leaping from a ledge. Then we rounded a bend and plunged into the green wilderness. Underneath was the Cumberland, two hundred feet wide, perhaps a dozen feet deep, an emerald tide flecked with foam. Ahead of us was the night, half a dozen wild Kentucky counties, and beyond them the rolling and broken country of Middle Tennessee.

My room had doors opening on the cabin and outer deck, two berths with plenty of covers, a small mirror, and a three-legged stool—primitive accommodations such as one expects on a freighter, yet adequate. Though it had been excessively warm in Burnside, one of the two egg-shaped stoves which stood in either end of the cabin had a fire in it, for spring nights are cool along the Cumberland. In the center of the cabin a table was set for seven—a cattle dealer, a farmer who had come upriver to sell his corn, four officers, and myself. Supper consisted of beefsteak with a notable gravy, scrambled eggs,

beans, potatoes, rice with cream, hot biscuit, plum jelly, coffee, and a pitcher of sweet milk. Everything was very good; board on a river freighter is always better than lodging.

After supper I went out on deck and watched the moon peer through the forest and phantom shores drift past. We were alone, or almost alone, on the river. For a hundred miles nothing was afloat upon it, except an occasional skiff in which mountainfolk were hunting bullfrogs; or perhaps a belated log raft bound for the mouth of the Obey down in Tennessee. Behind us, the river had already traveled a hundred and twenty miles from its mountain springs, passing fishtraps and milldams; passing timber cuttings whence walnut logs made the plunge over Cumberland Falls and rode down to Burnside; passing abandoned coal mines from which barges had braved the perils of Smith's Shoals and gone on to Nashville; passing also ruined cities of the mound builders, encampments of bygone Cherokees. Ahead of us for two hundred lonely miles no bridge crossed the Cumberland, and no railroad came nearer than a dozen leagues.

That is why, for six months of the year, steamboats plied the upper river. They ran only when there was plenty of water to float them and dirt roads were almost impassable. From December until June the Cumberland was the sole practicable highway of trade and travel for these secluded mountain counties; from June on, their people and goods sought the railroad. Thus cut off from the outside world, they follow primitive ways, use a peculiar speech, and live more to themselves than most Americans.

One of them joined me on deck—a six-footer of trenchant profile who used "fotch" for "fetch," called a saddle

roll a "budget," and spoke of hill trails as "towpaths," and among other canines named "fur hounds" and "meat hounds." He lived in a century-old wattle-and-daub house with "slick" walls. Buttermilk was his favorite drink. There are other of his remarks which I remember: The persimmon is a wilderness plum. Honey is the most interesting thing in the world. The best sorghum comes from the Knobs; when the cane mills had wooden rollers, they could be heard in the next township. There are eight grades of tobacco on a single stalk of burley—flyings (or dog bed), trash, good trash, lug, bright leaf, red, short red, tip. Old people sometimes fall asleep and into the open fires of their mountain homes. To escape a forest fire, run downhill, for "as the Good Book says, 'the sparks fly upward.' " There are footscrapers on the esplanade to Kentucky's white Capitol because "us mountain men don't aim to track in no mud."

The man was a livestock dealer as well as a farmer. He bought cattle and hogs in the back country, brought them to the river landings, and every fortnight made a shipment. Sometimes he drove a parcel of steers overland for sixty miles to Burnside, a three days' journey. Hogs were nearly always carried by boat, although they kept their weight pretty well on a drive; they were good for from twelve to fifteen miles a day where a steer would travel twenty. Sometimes, said my friend, the *Celina* carried six carloads of cattle, a hundred and twenty beasts.

When we reached his farm in the middle of the evening, a Negro went ahead with a lantern to light him over the gangplank, and he disappeared in the bordering willows.

Meanwhile we had passed Mill Springs—two or three

slab cabins at the foot of a cove through which water flowed. Farther up, it turned the great wheel of a mill that ground corn and wheat. Two miles away was fought the battle which gave Mill Springs a place in history. Our pilot added a marginal note to the printed record: "When Coffey (which was what he called General Zollicoffer) crossed the river he said, 'I'll give the Yankees a ride to hell'; but he was killed himself." The pilot said that a Union gunboat had once got up this far, and that a Confederate cannon which had tumbled over a near-by cliff was buried in the river bed.

Though now but a fading memory in an obscure corner of the Appalachian wilderness, Mill Springs was a name of note in the early chapters of the Civil War. Here the North won its first important success over the South after the Bull Run disaster six months before. It is better to follow Kentucky usage, and speak of the battle as between Federals and Confederates, for the leaders, Thomas on the one side and Crittenden on the other, were Southern and so were most of the troops.

During the evening the boat entered a lock beside a foaming dam, descended a dozen feet or more, and on the lower level swept forward at a swifter pace. Its transactions with the shore were numerous but slight—the wave of a lantern in the willows, a turn into the bank, the noise of feet below, the exit of a box or barrel, the coming aboard, it may be, of a basket of eggs.

Most Cumberland landings are just names in the woods, with now and then a shed for a warehouse, sometimes two sheds for high and low water. There is a difference of some sixty feet between the two levels, and the lower shed spends a good deal of time underwater. The number of landings is incredible. There must be

nearly two hundred in the hundred and forty miles between Burnside in Kentucky and Celina in Tennessee, the usual trade of our boat. Many of these are where streams enter the Cumberland, or ferries cross it. The rest serve country stores or individual farms.

So long as our boat had barter with the banks I stayed awake. When I went to bed and to dreamless sleep, I had need of all the covers. I awoke in a new world, enchanting and remote. The river had doubled in size and its transparent flood was moving swiftly along between steep hills over which the sun was rising. I thought to dress upon the deck, but the staring occupants of a mountain cabin showed on the skyline almost above me and I retreated to my room. For breakfast we had oatmeal, beefsteak, fried eggs, fried potatoes, hot biscuit, white mountain butter, coffee, and a pitcher of buttermilk.

We were in Cumberland County. Behind us, with the visions of the night, were three Kentucky counties. In Pulaski County the old log courthouse was still standing; the first man tried in it was accused of profane swearing and fined a few pounds of tobacco. Salt was made in the county; it has medicinal springs which were once small resorts, and a natural bridge.

A year later I made an overland expedition to the natural bridge. This little-known span, deep in the hills, is an amazing thing, its graceful and powerful arch more than a hundred feet across and almost that high. On one side is a dome which extends the arch nearly a hundred yards farther, the walls sweeping in a noble curve to the world above. Here, as I think, was laid the closing scene of Chateaubriand's prose classic *Atala*, the wanderings of its Indian lovers ending at "a natural bridge similar to that in Virginia." From the Natchez the great French-

man says he heard of their flight from the region of savannahs, cypress swamps, and Spanish moss to the mountains of Kentucky. As the largest and most romantic of all such arches in the Old West, this is the one of which rumor is likely to have reached him.

An hour's drive from the bridge, our party entered afoot an arched corridor which led downward under a long hill and came out on the banks of the Cumberland. Saltpeter, used in powdermaking, was mined there in the War of 1812. Though there seemed to be Indian grave mounds, the only living tenants of those sunless chambers were pallid, voiceless cave crickets, blind crawfish, and bats, which in winter hang from ledges in compound clusters as big as barrels. We stopped in a rocky alcove black as night, where our guide, a comely, barelegged, red-haired mountain girl, ladled out drinks of ice-cold water.

"Here you are alone in the depths of the earth with five men of whom you know nothing," said one of our number. "Doesn't it alarm you?"

"Not a bit," retorted the girl. "I could put out my lantern and leave the cave, and none of you would ever find his way out again!"

Perhaps fifty miles below the cave my boat tarried for an hour at the county-seat town of Burkesville, and I went ashore. Horseback riders were in the streets, catbirds warbled from the fences. At the courthouse I found the county judge sitting on the steps in his shirt sleeves and suspenders, whetting a pocketknife on the stone threshold. He bade me enter his office, which had a brick floor, handmade Kentucky armchairs, and a few shelves of lawbooks. For a door-brick he had some sort of fossil which we discussed; he thought it might be a petrified

ram's horn, and even pointed out the smooth place where the ram had polished its weapon on the trunks of prehistoric trees. An outer door of the courthouse was propped open with a larger ram's horn—if that is what it was; the judge found a muleshoe, and chipped off a horn fragment for me. "Come and see us again," was the parting word of this friendly mountain squire.

The little manor town has two claims to remembrance. Near here, where Renox Creek enters the Cumberland, there was opened in 1829 what is called the first commercially operated oil well in the United States. Like the Seneca Oil of New York, the liquid was thought to be a panacea for human ills. A Burkesville physician bottled it and shipped it abroad, where it won a name and him a fortune. Thirty years afterward, at Titusville, Pennsylvania, oil the medicine became oil the illuminant, and a new economic era was born.

For its second claim to notice, Burkesville was the threshold of the biggest raid of the most dashing of Confederate raiders. Here in July, 1863, John Morgan emerged from Tennessee and crossed the Cumberland at the head of twenty-five hundred mounted men, like himself mainly Kentuckians who were making a predatory visit to their home state. They kept going, and set the whole North in an uproar, and their trail crosses other pages of this volume. The expedition might be called a scampering odyssey over the Old West. So gallantly was it conducted that almost with regret a significant fact is set down: while the South had the horses, the North had the gunboats; they barred the raider's return to Dixie, and he went to prison.

Fishing is good at Burkesville, and when our boat resumed its course downstream, we had taken aboard

twenty-five pounds of red horse, black horse, salmon, and perch caught there the same morning. We went on through forests parted here and there by small creeks with curiously deep channels, broken by lofty bluffs where crows had their nests, framed at times by strips of good cornland. There was mistletoe in the water-loving sycamores. Sometimes we skirted gray-green patches of the all but vanished canebrake. One of these back from shore—so the pilot said—was haunted in winter by thousands of robins which men raided by night with clubs and bags; they eat robins in this part of the world, and bobolinks also. At a small landing an oxteam stood under a blasted sycamore; these sure-footed beasts are still widely used in snaking logs out of difficult hollows and over rough trails where neither horse nor mule is at home.

The wheel of our boat went wrong and we put into shore to tinker it, tying up to a water birch whose green branches turned the deck into an arbor. Among them, as in a summer garden, we had dinner. There was talk, which came to naught, of gathering a poke salad from the banks. We contented ourselves—and were well content—with the fish purchased at Burkesville, and which, rolled in flour, fried, and served with fresh onions and fresh corn bread, mashed potatoes, and coffee, made a satisfying repast.

Near the border we passed McMillin's Landing where Benton McMillin, one-time Governor of Tennessee and an outstanding Democrat in the days of Grover Cleveland, was reared. Just at the border was Stevens Landing, which has a warehouse half in Kentucky and half in Tennessee—an arrangement of potential advantages.

In the Civil War the Cumberland and its sister river, the Tennessee, crossed the Confederate line of defense,



which ran from Columbus on the Mississippi to Cumberland Gap in the Alleghenies and had the force under Zollicoffer at Mill Springs as its right wing. These two broad rivers, John Fiske points out, served as military highways leading for hundreds of miles through the central portion of the Confederacy, and up them went the Federal gunboats and Federal troops. They became the most important rivers in the war.

Gone are the gunboats. Gone also, or almost, the peaceful fleets that served the river, and sallied out of it to Louisville, to Cincinnati, to New Orleans. Only three steamboats were left on the Cumberland; I was aboard one of them. Like their predecessors, they were built on its banks and out of its bordering timber. The first steamboats burned wood. They were on the river as early as 1818. The Cumberland craft gave equal attention to passengers and freight. They were called palatial; and so, indeed, they were by contrast with the log cabin backgrounds of the folk they carried. Great and grateful was the change from solitary journeys by horseback or jolt-wagon, over roads which were a succession of bogs, gullies, stumps, and evil hills, to the social adventure of gliding along a smooth water highway in a numerous and friendly company. There was jollity aboard, with skilled black cooks and deferential black waiters to prepare and serve the substantial meals. Of the *Ellen Kirkman*, a boat of eight hundred and fifty tons, it was noted back in 1838 that all sorts of wines and tropical fruits were served on her table, and that the orchestra played the latest dance music.

In the declining days of the steamboat era, the national government installed a number of locks and dams, the first of these in 1904, which assured all-the-year naviga-

tion along the greater part of the river. The navigation is not there because the railroads tapped the Cumberland at strategic points and took away its trade.

Something remains, which was there before the railroad or the steamboat. That is the raft. In pirogues and flatboats that were little more than rafts, settlers came into the state from North Carolina during the latter years of the eighteenth century, descending the Tennessee and ascending the Ohio and Cumberland to the Great Bend where Nashville stands. In the form of rafts, the vast forest wealth along the upper river has reached the mills of Nashville, to go thence to all parts of the world. This traffic was at its height in the decade between 1880-1890. It is still active, profitable, pictorial. Nothing can supersede it, but its volume has been shrunken by the shrinkage of the virgin forest.

The latter part of my journey is more a tale of rafting than of steamboating. Always there were rafts in sight—moored along the banks or drifting down the river, each with its pilot and oarsmen and a little shanty in which the crew slept, with a clay fireplace before it at which meals were cooked. Two raftsmen came on at a landing and went down the river with us, one an elongated Tennessee mountaineer of six-feet-four, the other a burly, shaggy person with what seemed to be bullet holes in his hat, but soft-spoken and with an engaging smile. They told of the hardships of their calling, the danger from currents that sweep you against the bluffs, or pile you up on a shoal or the head of a fog-shrouded island.

Though noble hardwood forests stood in the upper Cumberland country, there was little outside demand for lumber, and rafting but a small industry, before the

Civil War. It reached major proportions in the seventies and high tide in the nineties. The rafts went down the freshets in fleets, and when their turbulent crews roved the streets of the state capital policemen made themselves scarce. Sometimes four hundred raftsmen would go back as deck passengers on a single steamer. Their fiddles made music aboard, and the contents of their jugs made trouble. One boat captain was stabbed to death in 1895.

Nowadays the annual water carriage to Nashville is not more than five million log feet. The raftsmen come back in trucks. There is less turbulence. Yet the rafts go down the same way, and a significant saying has it that the beard of a raftsman will turn a razor's edge. The river parade is just what it always was; but it does not take so long to pass a given point.

Every raft has a pilot and five oarsmen, three in front and two astern, and all sleep in its low shanty. The lumber speculator provides a bale of straw for bedding, the hands bringing their own coverlets. Also he stocks the shanty with forty pounds of side meat, two sacks of flour, half a bushel of cornmeal, a gallon of sorghum, and coffee, potatoes, and beans, together with a skillet and lid, a frying pan, dishpan, tea-kettle, and tin cups. There is always a rifle or so aboard and meals are diversified with rabbits and squirrels shot along the banks, with wild ducks, and tame, unlucky hens. Many of the men bring guitars or fiddles with them.

Celina, in Clay County, Tennessee, is both the end of steamboat navigation and the beginning of the rafting trade of the Cumberland. Smaller rafts, brought down the river by the men who cut the logs, or down the Obey which comes in at this point, are collected by

dealers and sent on in larger units to Nashville, two hundred and twenty miles away. The units contain from two hundred and fifty to four hundred logs. These are in three tiers, side by side, the tiers held together with whaling fastened by hickory pins. Rafts are about ninety yards long and average fifty-five thousand feet of lumber. Driven day and night, there are records of their having reached Nashville in two days. They are started down-river when a tide begins to fall. Sometimes a back rise, following heavy rains, makes the going so rough that rafts are laid up for a month or more. Should they be broken while riding a freshet, river pirates reap a harvest. The lumber speculator expects to clear from fifty to five hundred dollars on a raft. He pays his pilot twenty-five dollars a trip and the other hands twenty dollars.

Walnut and poplar were the first trees to be cut and rafted, the one because it was prized and valuable, the other because it was a "high floater"; half a century ago, a good walnut tree was worth at least a hundred dollars. Now all kinds of timber descend the river. Because it is too heavy to float, hickory was the last tree to feel the axe. Green sycamore will not float, nor will beech usually, and oak is uncertain. To get the heavier woods to the mill, they are mixed with poplar, ash, and linden, and the "sinkers" sometimes made secure by chain-dogs which, in effect, hang them to the whaling. Because of their buoyancy, old dead trees are purchased and incorporated with the floating mass.

At Celina, in the midst of the log squadrons of the Cumberland, my steamboat journey ended, and I passed from the adventure of the river to other adventures upon the land.

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## *IX. It Comes In at Cincinnati*

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THERE IS SOMETHING SHY ABOUT LITTLE RIVERS, AND shyest of all is Licking. It slips quietly into the Ohio opposite Cincinnati and in doing so does two characteristic things. One is to make an obtuse instead of an acute angle with the flow of the bigger river, which very few streams do. The other is to take a final twist just as its journey ends, and thereby hide from the city on the Ohio's other shore all except a stretch of water just long enough for a coal barge to tie up in. The device challenges one's curiosity.

On the day I came to town, I went down to the levee, as all newcomers do, for a look at the Ohio.

"What crick is that over there?" I asked an onlooker; only in more or less benighted Kentucky is creek pronounced as it is spelled.

"That is Licking River," said the native in a tone of reproach.

I resolved to learn all about Licking, which is what nobody can do. Once I measured its width by stepping off distances on the bridge between Newport and Covington. I tried to follow its banks afoot, only to find myself at times in people's back yards. Where did it come from, anyway? When I took my first railroad trip into

Kentucky, I caught glimpses of the river, hour after hour. When I was walking in the mountains not far from the line of the Virginias I found it there. At Lower Blue Licks, in the Outer Bluegrass, it was more of a river than at its mouth; but that was when a wild flood was gathering head in the hills.

Why not take a steamboat and go up the river to its mountain sources and see it all? It could not be done, I was told: first, because no packets used the river and, second, because there was no water to speak of. This did not seem reasonable, so I went to the books. In a publication of the United States Army Engineers' Office I found the following: "The Licking River was at one time partly improved by the State of Kentucky by the contruction of locks and dams. All the locks and practically all the dams are now obliterated, and navigation is confined to rafting on the upper river during high stages, and for steamboats during low water between the Ohio and Three Mile Ripple; during higher stages steamboats run up to Latonia, Ky." The publication listed a number of ripples, such as Three Mile Ripple, Six Mile Ripple, Dutchman's Ripple, Willow Ripple, Panther Creek Ripple, Flat Woods Ripple, a dozen in all, and the last one two hundred and twelve miles above its mouth. By and large, a rippling river!

A Kentuckian who lives at Ryland told me he had seen steamboats on Licking nearly twenty miles above its mouth. The encyclopedias were still more encouraging, one of them declaring that "at high water small steamboats can ascend to Falmouth, a distance of sixty miles." Flint records that a century ago, at high water, winter and spring, "many flatboats descend it from a distance of seventy or eighty miles to its mouth." From the pages

of Collins, I learned that my dream of a long steamboat trip was nullified only because a dream of Kentucky's never came true. In 1837 it made a survey, the object of which was to render Licking navigable for two hundred and thirty-one miles, which would have brought packets into the hills.

Why did I like Licking the moment I set eyes on it? After some reading and a little reflection I know the answer. It is because it is a little river. "There's no music like a little river's," says Stevenson. "It quiets a man down like saying his prayers." The little rivers of America quieted down that injurious Englishwoman, Frances Trollope. She admired "the wild, rocky, narrow, rapid little rivers," too small for boats, which ran into the Ohio and were "a thousand times more beautiful." As for Licking, it is "a brisk rapid (ripple?) dancing among white stones, very picturesque."

In savage history, of course, the little rivers of the land were the big ones. I know of only four Indian town sites along the whole length of the Ohio. The home of the red man, and of the mound builder before him, was far up the courses of the little rivers—the Mahoning, Beaver, Tuscarawas, Muskingum, Scioto, and the Miamis. No Indians lived along Licking, nor anywhere else in Kentucky; but they knew its valley too well. It was the main warpath of the Ohio tribes when they raided the fortified stations of the Bluegrass in the crimson decade of border history that began with the Revolution. Painted armies came down the Miamis, crossed the Ohio near Cincinnati—even then gateway between North and South—and went up Licking.

A more significant name than either it has worn was given to Cincinnati by the Wyandots. They called it

Tu-ent-a-hab-whag-ta, "the place where the road leaves the river." To savages, the little rivers were mere routes, and they traveled beside them afoot. Once, however, when they attacked Ruddell's Station, they did get a brass cannon in a keelboat up Licking to Falmouth. Later, at Lower Blue Licks, many miles beyond, they wrote Kentucky's blackest chapter.

The peacetime role of Licking has been political, and important. It divides and bounds, and rival counties march along each side of it. Until yesterday, Kentucky had no bridges to speak of, save a few reverberating, covered ones, the biggest of which were on Licking; when there are only fords and ferries, a narrow waterway looks very much like a valid political boundary. Since the river is about three hundred and fifty miles long, it bounds a good deal.

For the same reason that it used to be called Great Salt Creek it is Licking now. Upper and Lower Blue Licks were places of resort for salt-boiling by red men and white alike, and they knew there was salt water there because they saw deer and buffalo licking the earth. Like its companion streams, however, the river has an older, more musical name. The Indians knew it as Nepernine. While I do not know it as well as I could wish, my guess is that, with its willow-shadowed banks and sedate pools, its shoals and ripples, most of it looks to this day quite as it did when that was its name.

There is a Licking country back in the hills. I have been a traveler there, walking its paths and eating and sleeping in cabins. It is a land of steeply pitched cornfields, and splash dams, and ancient feuds smoldering toward harmless ashes, and glen-dwelling farmers who have sorghum on their tables the year around, speak



highly of groundhog meat as a side dish, and know not too much about hard times in the cities. What they complain of is that skunks raid their bee-rows at night, tapping on the hives until the honey-makers crawl out, and then scooping them up, stingers and all.

The past has left its impress upon the region. Families are large, as they were in the period between 1820 and 1860 when, according to Shaler, Kentucky made contribution of at least a million persons to the population of other states, notably Southern Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, Arkansas, Mississippi, and Texas. Still you find crossroads stores that sell snuff and glass lamps; smokehouses redolent of hams and hickory; little log barns and corncribs; cowpens under rock ledges, dwellings with outside stone chimneys and open hearths, and over the hearth the bubbling bean pot. The sound of bells on pasturing beasts drifts down from the hillsides.

Women work in the fields in the Licking country as they did everywhere in the frontier time, accounting it agreeable escape from chores performed within the narrow walls of their habitations; and they do the milking, which they say never was a proper task for men anyway. They stand and wait on the table, at least when there are guests, while the men eat first, a custom a good deal older than history. The county court days, church revivals, creek baptisms, communal huskings, singing schools, and spelling bees of this rural society all have sanction of the generations. So enough remains to reconstruct the picture of what was. If mainly these are folk of slender means and old-fashioned ways, "poverty and antiquity," says Taine, "are never ugly."

In early Licking days the usual household lived on corn bread, turnips, deer, and wild turkeys; turkeys so

fat that, when shot from a tree, sometimes their skins burst as they fell to the ground. Every family pined for wheat bread and tame meat, and liked hog meat better than beef, as still the hillfolk do. The virgin soil was too strong for wheat; not until several crops of maize had been cut from it would the smaller grain head up right. But melons and turnips thrived in the rich earth, the one taking the place of peaches in summer, the other of apples in winter, in days before there were bearing orchards. Daniel Drake pictures a December night in his Kentucky home, when the family "sat around a fire made blazing bright with pieces of hickory bark, a substitute for candles, and every member was engaged with a dull case-knife in scraping a sweet and juicy turnip." Walnuts, hickory nuts, and winter grapes were luxuries from the surrounding woods.

This was the self-sufficing period in American life, and its outlines changed little when bison, deer, and turkeys passed. Byron puts it all in a line: "This unsighing people of the woods." The typical family made three trips to the county seat—twice to pay taxes, once to attend the county fair—and during the rest of the year remained at home, where there was plenty to do. It raised its staple foods in field, orchard, and pasture, did its own butchering, carried its corn on horseback to be ground at the nearest water mill or horse mill, smoked its own tobacco, slept on ticks of straw or cornhusks of its own manufacture, drew its sweets from its sugar trees, beehives, and sorghum patch, baked its own biscuit, johnnycake, and pies, canned its fruit, molded its candles, spun, wove, and dyed its cloth, sewed its carpet rags, cut its own firewood, and got what "cash money" it needed for taxes, tea, and coffee by sending logs down the water-

courses to the sawmills and selling pelts and ginseng to the little stores in the woods. The schools were "blab-schools," where pupils studied aloud.

Did they lead a joyless and drudging life, these men and women on distant Licking? Those who want to take things easy would return one answer, and those who want to be close to the soil, who like the contact with primal realities, and who rejoice to see the work of their hands take shape before them, might return another.

Since the logic of events is with the former, let us hear the case of the latter, and first the Greek, Menander: "For him that hath not one design that's evil, how adequate a possession a farm that keeps him well!" Now the Frenchman, de Tocqueville: "The famous republics of antiquity never gave examples of more unshaken courage, more haughty spirits, or more intractable love of independence, than were hidden in former times among the wild forests of the New World." Now the American, Thomas Jefferson: "Those who labor in the earth are the chosen people of God, if ever He had a chosen people, whose breasts He has made His particular deposit for substantial and genuine virtue. . . . Corruption of morals in the mass of cultivators is a phenomenon of which no age nor nation has furnished an example. It is the mark set on those who, not looking up to heaven, to their own soil and industry, as does the husbandman, for their subsistence, depend for it on casualties and caprice of customers. . . . While we have land to labor, then, let us never wish to see our citizens occupied at a work bench, or twirling a distaff."

There speaks what Frederick Turner calls "the old rural democracy of the uplands." Though its ways are gone or going, its spirit guides the American dream.

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## *X. Below the Rim of Bluegrass*

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IN MY WANDERINGS OVER THE NEIGHBORING STATE I was always coming across the Kentucky River. So were the folk of an earlier day. The hillmen built their homes on its upper reaches and shipped salt, lumber, and coal upon it. The men of the Bluegrass knew its great gorge chiefly as a barrier to travel, and built elsewhere. Save the state capital, there is no important town upon the river. There are, however, places of much interest, at some of which—Jackson, Irvine, Boonesboro, and Frankfort—I have tarried. High Bridge also I have visited. It spans the river gorge where it is noblest, with perpendicular cliffs of limestone more than three hundred feet high; travelers of a century ago likened them to the Palisades of the Hudson and made long journeys by stage to see them. Along much of the river are memories of Daniel Boone, who knew it well.

Wanting to know it better myself, I boarded the oil-burning boat *Revonah* one September morning at Carrollton for a ride upstream. Here its waters end their journey of more than four hundred miles. Of their beginnings I already knew something. The America of log cabins, pickled corn, and antique speech lies at the head-

waters of the Kentucky, and summer after summer I had been there. Leaving these waters, I had toiled up among blue hills, followed vague lumber roads into lonely places, essayed crags where the mother hawk sounded her warning.

The Cumberlands—out of which the river flows—occupy the southeastern third of Kentucky, reaching on the Virginia line a height of four thousand feet. They are the habitat of elder Americans, farmerfolk who value a good spring more than a scope of timber, welcome you to bed and board, quiz you in curious yet courtly phrase, and warn you lest you get “dog-bitten” or “owl-struck” in the twilight, or “swim-headed” beside a “pour-over” which is a waterfall. The men have English faces, the women a Scotch physiognomy, and they are a tall folk. They are poor, most of them, and some of them make moonshine, and get tangled up in murderous feuds of which nobody quite recalls the beginning. Yet they have a passionate fondness for the mountains, their hospitality is prodigal, and their speech, in which are random Chaucerian echoes, is the most definite thing in the world. They sing old ballads, invent new ones—mostly about local outlaws, and ask grace over their meals.

Now I was to take up the river’s story in what mountainfolk call the level country.

Carrollton is a good town situate at the confluence of the Kentucky and the Ohio, seventy-five miles below the mouth of Licking. Between it and Frankfort, sixty-six miles upstream, which was my destination and which was the head of regular navigation, there are merely inconsiderable villages, and landings that carry obscure names not all of which are known at all times to the rivermen

themselves, for whenever a farm changes hands the new owner gives its threshold his own name.

Poring over these landings in the register of an extinct steamboat line gave me a foretaste of the inland journey. From about two hundred that once dotted the shores for a hundred and sixty miles the following are noted, either to rescue them from oblivion or to get the quality of another day that is in them: Heath's Ferry, Harman's Barn, Mouth of Eagle, Mole Hole, Sugar Tree, Dr. Perry's, Glen Mary, Mussel Shoals, Mefford's Store, Lead Mines, Widow Roberts, Clay Lick, Razor Ferry, Pot Ripple, Hog Thief, Buffalo Crossing, Tywhaperty, Smoot's Cabin, Big Eddy, Shark's Horse Mill, Elkhorn, Hardin's Boat, Cave Spring, White House, Salt Springs, Brooklyn, Shaker Ferry, Bowman's Warehouse, Paint Lick, Boone's Ferry, Soper's Mill.

At Carrollton tobacco sticks came aboard with me, and a friendly farm woman in her sixties; and each was a symbol. The question went ashore at every landing, "Got your cutting done yet?" for this was a tobacco country, and the burley was being taken in to dry in barns, to hang from sticks such as we carried. The other industries were dairying and corn raising; most of the cows that I saw were white-faced Herefords and golden Guernseys; what I learned about the corn crop I gathered from the farm wife. She said that the high water in June had washed out the earlier plantings along the rich river bottoms, including ten acres of her own; and she pointed to the broad-leaved cockleburs which it had sowed in their stead. The only way to get rid of these, she thought, was to cut them with a "mowing scythe"; a Kentuckian is always terribly definite in the use of terms.

When I was not watching the corn and tobacco and

pasture fields, and the marching willows that screened them, I might be talking to this woman. She called me alternately "honey" and "child," and I liked either better than the "uncle" with which one may be greeted in other parts of Dixie. At intervals she retired to the cabin for a smoke. On this as on other matters I ventured to interview her. She said she was ashamed to smoke in the company of men—and kept on tranquilly puffing in my presence; it seemed that I was not yet of adult estate. Her pipe had a small stone bowl and perhaps an alder stem. She said she could find none other like it and was afraid it would break. "This one here," and she dug another from her work basket, "is no better than dirt."

Pronounced views she held on the matter of cigarette smoking by girls, and pointed them with the brandished stem of her pipe. "Cigarettes and bobbed hair go with other things that as a lady I do not care to mention," she said, "but that as a man (and here I suddenly became of age) you can imagine."

I must give the results, such as they were, of an attempt to ascertain the backgrounds of this entertaining woman's life.

"Do you raise cattle?" I asked.

"No, just cows."

"Any good horses in your country?"

"We have horses."

"But I said 'good horses,' " I persisted.

"Well, they are good to work with."

"Do you have pigs?"

"Yes, we keep hogs."

Meanwhile our craft, a clean white boat something more than a hundred feet long and of some ninety tons burden, moved upstream at about eight miles an hour.

Sometimes it took on a hand basket of spring chickens or a bushel basket of ripe tomatoes. Steadily from landing to landing it put ashore groceries and hardware. Everywhere glass fruit jars were put off, for it was canning season in the Outer Bluegrass. What do country people do with last year's jars? Much ice was also sent ashore. There was a time when the valley ground its own flour and stored its own ice, but mills went when wheat gave way to corn, and icehouses when there was no longer lumber for the sawmills and therefore no sawdust.

Somehow these countryfolk had come to terms with the wilderness. In the amicable sunshine we went up a quiet river as through the backwoods. Willows, poplars, and water beeches shut off the outside world, and on the long arms of sycamores pondered the gypsy jays. Mud turtles slumbered on logs, fish leaped from the water, yellow butterflies drifted across the stream. The silence was broken somewhat, for the kingfisher sounded his watchman's rattle, chewinks sang in the thickets, and beyond them was the locust, scissors grinder of the fields. Now and then a great blue heron, tallest of American birds, flapped ahead with his gaunt neck tucked in his bosom and his lathelike legs stretched straight behind; when he landed he did it awkwardly, with tottering steps. Not many claims to pulchritude has this stilted fowl of the river reaches, but in flight his broad, blue-gray, black-edged wings are a beautiful thing.

At the right time came the cook. "Colonel," he said (another good Kentucky idiom), "come in and eat."

I dipped water from a milk can into a pan, washed my hands, dried them on the kitchen roller towel, and sat down with other men at the table for the first of three



meals aboard. There was a stew of meat and potatoes, and also there was bread and butter, sliced raw tomatoes, sliced cucumbers in vinegar, green beans cooked with pork, New Orleans molasses, and a rice pudding—all very good. The molasses interested me most, not that it was reminiscent of an early trade of the pioneers with Spanish Louisiana, but because I learned for the first time how it should be negotiated. All my life I had been debating whether to spread it on a slice of bread and follow it with the butter, or whether to put the butter on first; one way the liquid soaks through the slice, the other way it runs off. On the *Revonah* they work the molasses and butter into a paste upon the plate and then transfer it to the bread, where it stays put.

I learned other important things at that meal, for all Kentuckians have definite ideas on food and drink. For greens the hillpeople use nineteen different plants: bear's lettuce, crowfoot, cow's glory, creese, dandelion, dock, elder leaves, goose's tooth, lady's thumb, lamb's quarter, plantain, pepper-and-salt, poke, puccoon leaves, shone, sissle, speckledick, wild turnip, and woolen breeches. Also, they dry milkweed blossoms and put them in soup; mushrooms, fried in a skillet, they call "dry land fish." Of persimmons they make a refreshing beer, and I was told that one glass of their papaw brandy spins a man around like a top.

Another dainty is Rabbit Scrapple. You cut up two rabbits, boil them until the bones will work out, knead the meat with corn meal, adding salt, black pepper or red, and a little lemon and vinegar, and put the product in a milk crock to solidify. For breakfast, slice, roll in flour, and fry. The supply should last your family about a fortnight.

After dinner there was talk with Eddie the cook. His first remark won him a disappointment.

"Did you ever notice," he said, "in your river journeys around here, that where there are hills along the water's edge on one side, there is always wide land on the other?"

"Yes," I said, "and so has every traveler who wrote about them; and each man thought he was the first to discover it."

"I thought I was," Eddie confessed.

The cook had seen pretty nearly all of that inner land which is served by rivers. His forearm carried a thing that proclaimed this, the tattooed and vivacious figure of a female trapeze performer—always an emblem of the wandering life. He had cooked for circuses and done other work on the steamboats of a dozen waterways. Also, he had traveled on showboats along the lagoons of the far South. He told of a battle he had witnessed between a company of showboat actors on the Big Kana-wha and some hard men from the hills; the actors proved the harder folk. What he remembered best in a life of vicissitude was a river in the South which rises in the Gulf of Mexico and flows into some other river.

"At high tide, that's possible," I admitted.

"Possible?" ejaculated Eddie. "It's actual!"

Through all the afternoon the boat did business with the shore. Twice we passed through lock gates turned by men at hand windlasses, and each time mounted to a level perhaps fifteen feet above. At the landings small groups of countrypeople were waiting, usually with a bird dog which raced up the gangplank and paid the cook a visit before scurrying ashore. On the down trip, when cattle and hogs are shipped, shepherd dogs aid in getting them on the boat.

Our course was southerly, through the middle of Carroll, along the boundaries of Henry and Owen counties and part way through Franklin. Each adds a line to the American epic. At the river's mouth two blockhouses had known the Indian invader, and near it were remains of two aboriginal fortresses. Rope walks, pioneer taverns, huge gristmills, these had come and gone. Drennon's Springs still ships black sulphur water to the cities. It was once a deer lick, and a stopping place on a great bison trail, and after that what Collins calls "a place of considerable resort during the watering season."

Above us for most of the way was that great oval meadow, a hundred miles across, called the Bluegrass. Through it the river had cut a course so deep that, had I not traversed it before, it would have remained a mere name to me. Lexington is its capital, the first seat of culture in the Old West, and Harrodsburg its most historic town. It is one of Kentucky's three grand divisions—the other two are Rhododendron and Pennyroyal—and it is a province of the imagination. It gave to the nation political leaders like Henry Clay, the Crittendens, and the Breckenridges, writers like James Lane Allen and John Fox, Jr.; its young men were the flower of the Confederate armies; its fair women are the toast of the South, its fast horses are apt to be a little faster than any other, its corn liquor is potent and smooth, its mint juleps the text of rhapsody. On all these matters a familiar legend has been builded, and a phrase carries it. The Bluegrass is Old Kentucky, and of all other states none but Virginia wears the adjective; there is a reason.

What I found above the river rim was a sumptuous and silken country, with hills that had feminine curves, and pastures that were like noblemen's parks, and

cocoa-colored plowlands, and stone walls built by slaves in the long ago, and sculptured stone portals—thousand-gated is the Bluegrass—and spacious dwellings with Doric or Corinthian columns set far back among trees where the mistletoe grows and people still live in the grand manner. I have never been certain whence comes the charm of the region—undeniable and unique; but I suspect that it is in the soil itself, more responsive than any other, and that an autumn field, plowed and tilled, is its fairest sight.

Though we were traversing a part of Kentucky almost the oldest in point of settlement, neither on that day nor the next, until I reached the state capital did I see a car. Nor did I see a buggy, or many wagons. However it may be farther back, the typical conveyance of the banks is a mule sled, which will not topple over, and runs better in foul weather than in fair. A size or so larger are the hand-ferries that keep the shores in touch with each other. Muskrat holes beside their mooring places suggest a merely provisional traffic. At one village, where the skin of some animal was nailed to the door of a barn, we caught the note of the backwoods. Was it a coon or a skunk? The deck debate was referred to a native.

"That's a sheep," he replied.

The incident awakened random memories of the upper river. So winding was its course that, as one lumberman told me, he left his boardinghouse at dawn, drove a raft downstream until dark, tied up, and walking a hundred paces over a hogback, had supper where he had taken breakfast. At Berea College in the Knob country—where the chapel chimes play old mountain ballads—I saw lads from the hills shoveling the winter paths of

the town, milking a great herd of cows, hauling manure to the fields, working in blacksmith shops, making looms and brooms, and otherwise exemplifying the college motto of Learning and Labor. When I walked the woodland paths of Bloody Breathitt, I always gave a halloo from the roadside before approaching a cabin, lest a shot come through the door, an old mountain custom not quite forgone. On market day I heard blind fiddlers playing such jigging numbers as "Arkansaw Traveler," "Boating up Sandy," "Money Musk," "Sourwood Mountain," "Turkey in the Straw," "Weevily Wheat,"—the same tune, so far as I could see, under different names. In a windowless log house with a dirt floor, I watched an old lady, well spoken and with easy manners, spinning black wool. When I remarked on its color she asked with gentle curiosity:

"What kind of wool does your mother spin?"

It was night when our boat reached a landing just below the third lock, and there we made fast, all the other passengers going to their homes. For a while, lanterns gleamed on the shore while goods were stowed in a rude shed, one of the two survivals of a number of large warehouses that once had stood along the river. Then the roustabouts set off singing for Monterey, a small town a mile inland; these were white lads, farm-bred—a rollicking, clear-eyed group.

Before going to bed I climbed the bank and found there only the starlit dark, katydids, dew-drunken fireflies tangled in the grass, bats that shed silence from their velvet wings. Lights went out on the boat at eight o'clock and I was stowed in a cot in the cabin. A black, inert mass, the *Revonah* lay beside the shore of what seemed an unpeopled wilderness. Faintly I heard an

owl's whimper, the antiphonal chant of whippoorwills. Through the night watches fog and dew wrought their spell, and once when I awoke I saw that a late-risen moon was in trouble in the mists.

It was not yet daybreak when the purser roused me. "Sorry," he said, "but people are already on the bank waiting to come on board, and they may want to enter the cabin." There were feet on the gangplank. I dressed in less than a minute, and going outside found a score or more of passengers who had driven in from distant farms. Most of them were young women and some had red hair. One of them had honey hair and neck as white as buckwheat bloom; she may have been mountain bred and reared under a sunbonnet in the Cumberland fashion. All were bound for Frankfort, for this was Saturday, the big day of river travel.

Going through the lock, we began a fog-shrouded passage in the upper pool of the Kentucky. It was chilly on deck and young mothers brought their infants into the cabin. Outside, the lively banter of the farm girls seemed to aid the sun in dispelling the gloom. Frequently a red-haired maiden proclaimed that she was "sweating." Our first stop was at a landing so obscure that the girls concluded it was made so the crew could pick a mess of beans. The next was likewise, and they said it must be to dig a hill of potatoes.

Also, we passed Steamboat Hollow, a diminutive bottom at the foot of steep hills where the first steamboat to run on the Kentucky was built more than a century ago. Made of indestructible black locust, it is said still to be afloat, but on other waters. The place put the pilot in mind of old days on the river. As early as 1816 a steamboat descended the Kentucky, and went on down to New

Orleans. Steamboats of from two hundred to four hundred tons burden began making round trips between Frankfort and New Orleans not later than 1820. A generation before, in 1787, that alert adventurer General James Wilkinson, for the moment in private life, sent a flatboat loaded with tobacco, hams, and butter down this river and the Ohio and Mississippi to the Spaniards at New Orleans. Steamboats can ascend the Kentucky, and have done so, to a distance of two hundred and sixty miles, fourteen locks and dams providing this slack-water navigation. Towboats pushing oil barges still come down the river from about that far up, and some coal reaches Frankfort the same way. Pleasure craft travel the whole course of the stream as far as the Forks on the edge of the mountain country. From High Bridge down it runs fuller in the dry season than almost any other. Rivermen say it is deeper than the Ohio.

With an average width of not quite a hundred yards, however, bankslips can work mischiefs here to which the larger stream is stranger. It was dangerous, the pilot said, for a boat to tarry beside high timber. He told of one snagboat—there are three on the Kentucky—that took this chance a few months before. Suddenly a group of tall sycamores rode out into the river near the bow. Another clump of trees shot in a little astern. The boat got out just in time to escape a third landslip which thrashed the water with the arms of forest giants.

Day brightened as we worked upstream, and commerce multiplied with the shore. Though it was an ancient land through which we were traveling, the river held to its sequestered ways, moving between blank curtains of forest, passing at times beside high limestone crags, outliers of the gorge beyond Frankfort. Among them in a misty

woodland, we came upon that symbol of the wild, a buzzards' roost. This somber fowl, by Leviticus held unclean and yet high priest of cleanliness in the temple of nature, has much to do with man, or with his flocks and herds; but it dwells afar in difficult places. "Gregarious, peaceable and harmless, never offering any violence to a living animal or depriving the husbandman of his stock"—such is the tribute of Alexander Wilson.

Scores of the great birds were wheeling over treetops, flying through the branches, squatting on limbs with wings outspread to the slanting sunshine, drinking at the water's edge, and jostling and hissing at each other there. Among them were what I thought might be creatures of another kind, for their wings were barred with a broad band of white; these were young birds, not yet completely divested of the color they bore when hatched. They had come out of hollow trees and dim ledges far above, where the mother buzzards build their nests.

In a golden midmorning we came to Frankfort. A mile below it the rushing lock waters lifted us again. There was a hemp-mill beside the dam, and a dismantled distillery, each standing for a glory that had passed. Once the empire of hemp, Kentucky was now but a satrapy therein; and boats no longer brought down corn to be made into ardent spirits. Frankfort itself has seen the passing of other river industries. It was a considerable shipping port; it had large boatyards that turned out broadhorns, keel craft, pirogues, and even sailing vessels for the Atlantic trade. It remains a secluded and sightly capital.



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## *XI. Up Salt River*

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THE BEST- AND LEAST-KNOWN RIVER IN KENTUCKY IS one of its smallest. Before ever I knew "Suwanee River" I sang a little song about the Kentucky stream, the words taken from a country newspaper, the tune perhaps "Baby Mine." It was the morning after an October election in a presidential year and I was driving our cow around the edge of an Ohio village to a distant pasture field. On the edge of the village lived Democrats and other dubious folk. So I sang:

"Have you heard the glorious news,  
Democrats, Democrats,  
From Indiana State,  
Democrats, Democrats?  
It was there we had a vote  
That has set you all afloat  
Up Salt River in a boat,  
Democrats!"

All the little Democrats were enraged. Imputations of falsehood, invitations to combat, and age-old gestures of derision were flung at their quondam playmate. Unheeding, but possibly quickening the pace of the cow, I passed in song out of the zone of danger into friendly bucolic territory.

Through most of America's political history, defeated parties and candidates have been taking rides up Salt River. A typical reference is found in the autobiography of David Crockett, Tennessee coonskin-cap politician, in his account of a visit to New York during the Jackson administration. At a Whig banquet there, a Georgia orator "made a speech that fairly made the tumblers hop; he rode the Tories up and over Salt River." In all old-time election jollifications there was a boat on wheels, which was fabled to carry the defeated up a stream of oblivion. The fable was current in speeches, editorials, and headlines, and its strong pictorial quality appealed to cartoonists. The usual drawing showed a lonely river flowing among dead trees draped with Spanish moss, on which buzzards sat watching a boat's crew, with the sunset on their haggard and dejected countenances. Sometimes the artist lightened the sketch by making the crew ragged but joyous, as all true adventurers are even when the game goes against them.

Though few have known or thought about it, there is a real river underlying the legend, just as there is a real Arcadia under the Arcady of the poets, and a real Bohemia under the realm of dreaming, passionate artists. What only steamboatmen, farmers, and the Roarers of vanished yesterdays seem to have thought worth doing, I have done. I have gone up Salt River, far enough to savor its quality. The mental picture I have of it seems to fit the legend. There is that about the lower stretches of the little Kentucky waterway which suggests the words of Isaiah: "The screech owl shall rest there. . . . There shall the great owl make her nest. . . . There shall the vultures also be gathered."

The fable that unlucky political parties go up Salt

River is the one great allegory which America has produced. Nor is there anything like it elsewhere, except that which pictures the passage of the dead across the river Styx into the land of shades. The Salt River story seems to me the more haunting of the two, for the Stygian journey was just from shore to shore, and the Kentucky expedition goes on into the nowheres.

While it is the greatest, "Rowing up Salt River" is only one of America's numerous political phrases which are of the West, the Old West. Like all its issues and most of its presidential candidates, the metaphors of politics—drawn from Indian and pioneer usage and early river navigation—are frontier stuff. The savage contributed terms of both peace and war. After "big chiefs" had held "powwows" around the "council fire," parties named their candidates in "wigwams." Factions "buried the hatchet" or "dug it up." Insurgents donned "war paint," "made war-medicine," brandished the "toma-hawk" and "scalping knife," went "on the warpath," found "Indian sign," came back, and "smoked the pipe of peace." The shouts of crowds were "war whoops"; their alleged inspiration was "firewater," and "wampum" their objective.

Pioneer political idioms present the American not so much a fighting animal as a schemer and compromiser, practical and astute. Having selected "good presidential timber," he "takes the stump" and without "beating around the bush" declares that the opposition has "taken to the woods." In the next breath he affirms that his friends are there also; "the woods are full of them." The enemy is "barking up the wrong tree" and is necessarily "skunked" in the sequel. The victors talk of "shaking the plum tree," opine that "the longest pole knocks the persimmons," hope for a "windfall." In Congress they

may sit "on the fence" and applaud some "Tall Sycamore of the Wabash," but they get action through "logrolling." These are all timber terms. Out of the Great American Forest, also, comes a related vernacular: "the pork barrel"; "hog and hominy"; "corn-fed"; "go the whole hog"; "root, hog, or die"; "smoke them out"; "stand without hitching"; "kick over the traces"; "a one-horse party"; "the tail goes with the hide"; "hide, hump, and heels"; "jump a claim"; "blaze a path"; "keep the pot abilin'"; "a land-office business."

Timothy Flint said a century ago: "The conversation of the west country man indicates that his train of thinking is modified by images drawn from great distances on long rivers, from extensive trips on steamboats, long absences from home, familiarity with exposure, and the habit of looking danger and death in the face." A phrase or so will make the point: At the beginning of an action, political or otherwise, you are "on deck"; as it gathers headway, you "let off steam"; you try to "make the raffle"; if you fail, you "bust a boiler." "Going up Salt River" is of this category, though it refers to flatboating rather than steamboating.

Salt River is a fresh-water stream. It gets its name from the fact that, very early in the history of Kentucky, salt was made upon its banks. Salt springs, in the Old West at least, are usually found by the sides of rivers; in this case they were near Shepherdsville, twenty-eight miles above the river's mouth. Here, an early account says, "the fires of an hundred salt furnaces gleamed through the forest." Writing in 1796, the geographer Jedidiah Morse records that their output supplied Kentucky and Cumberland, and was "exported to the Illinois country."

The river rises near Danville, flows north through

Bluegrass and west through Pennyroyal Kentucky, and reaches the Ohio twenty-six miles below Louisville. Nearly a hundred and fifty miles long, it serves a significant region and does its bit to make the map of Kentucky. Danville, beside its springs, was an ancient state capital. With its tributary, Rolling Fork, it forms the boundary lines of four Kentucky counties.

Harrodsburg, best known of the communities upon Salt, is the oldest town in Kentucky, oldest place of English settlement west of the Alleghenies. *Nick of the Woods*, by Robert Montgomery Bird, best novel of Western life before *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, launches its story upon the same stream. If the novel averages at least a fight to a chapter, so does the history of Salt River, as long as the northern bank of the Ohio was known as the Indian Shore. Savage raids were incessant, many of them into the region of the salt licks, rendezvous of wild beasts and wild and half-wild men. They may be called salt wars; ancient Germany knew such. One engagement of the first rank took place beside the waters of Salt; but this was in the Civil War and on a tributary, forty thousand men under Buell and Bragg fighting a bloody and indecisive battle at Perryville in 1862.

On the waters of Salt is Catholic Kentucky, settled in the long ago from tidewater Maryland. There also is the Lincoln country. On the thin red soils near Hodgenville, Thomas Lincoln farmed for a while, and there the accepted story is that Abraham was born.

There is more to explain about the stream than the fact that the journeys of the defeated were supposed to be upon it. "Pride goeth before destruction and an haughty spirit before a fall." Salt River became a parable of the one as well as the other. Colossal metaphor,

provocative language tempered by boisterous humor, Homeric boasting and posturing—these were the marks of the Salt River Roarers of early American tradition. The picture their tirades present is of a rude frontiersman, who has been communing with corn liquor, standing on a stump and proclaiming his own terrors to a sniggering crowd. At the end he flaps his arms like a barnyard fowl, leaps in air, cracks his heels together, and emits a prolonged “cock-a-doodle-doo!”

In a double sense this is Salty Speech. It is the voice of rough woods and rough waters coming from lungs inflated by the megalomania of men who have mastered both. A distinct literary style it may be called, for it has got into newspapers and political oratory. The circus three-sheet of today is in the best Salt River manner. No longer does one newspaper editor say of another, “The pestiferous insect across the street is a cock-eyed son of perdition.” But abusive speech is not dead on the stump, and the stage still knows the humorous braggart who uses language of cosmic exaggeration to tell how tough he is.

*Nick of the Woods* took early note of the phenomenon. An outstanding character is Roaring Ralph Stackpole of Salt River, who calls himself “the ramping tiger of Rolling Fork.” Bird calls him “one of the first and perhaps the parent of the race of men who have made Salt River renowned in story.” Thus the novelist limns him: “He was a stout, bandy-legged, broad-shouldered, bull-headed tatterdemalion, ugly, mean and villainous of look; yet with an impudent, swaggering, joyous self-esteem traced in every feature and expressed in every action of body, that rather disposed the beholder to laugh than to be displeased at his appearance.”

"I'm a ring-tailed squealer," says Ralph by way of introduction to the Kentucky settlement where he appears in 1782. In a moment he is off: "I'm a gentleman and my name's *Fight!* Foot and hand, tooth and nail, claw and mud-scraper, knife, gun and tomahawk, or any way you choose to take me, I'm your man! Cock-a-doodle-doo! I'm for any man that insults me! log-leg or leather breeches, green-shirt or blanket coat, land-trotter or river-roller—I'm the man for a massacree!"

Here Bird interrupts the harangue to describe the manner of it. The Salt River worthy "snorted and neighed like a horse; he bellowed like a bull; he barked like a dog, he yelled like an Indian; he whined like a panther; he howled like a wolf." Mainly he acted like a Mississippi alligator in spring. This reptile "roars, he blows the water from his nostrils, he whirls round and round, churning the water into foam, until, having worked himself into a proper fury, he seeks an antagonist." Because of such antics, Bird suggests, the Kentuckian became known as "half horse, half alligator."

Let Ralph have the floor again—or the stump: "Whar's your buffalo-bull to cross horns with the roarer of Salt River? Whar's your full-blood colt that can shake a saddle off? Hyar's an old nag can kick off the top of a buckeye! Whar's your cat of the Knobs? Your wolf of the Rolling Prairies? Hyar's the old brown b'ar can claw the bark off a gum-tree. Arn't I a ring-tailed squealer? Can go down Salt on my back, and swim up the Ohio! Whar's the man to fight Roaring Ralph Stackpole?"

So also spake Mike Fink, ruffianly flatboat hero of legend, the Snapping Turtle of the Ohio, the Snag of the Mississippi; and Little Billy, Florida worthy, who "towed

the broadhorn up Salt River where the snags were so thick that a fish couldn't swim without rubbing his scales off"; and Davey Crockett, who answered a boatman's stallion neigh by crowing like a cock and patting him on the head with an oar; and those two quarreling raftsmen celebrated by Mark Twain, one of whom averred, "When I range the earth hungry, famine follows in my tracks."

Whence the double fable of political disaster and of rodomontade? Authorities and would-be authorities concern themselves only with one side of it—the Ride of Defeat. The explanation accepted in Europe is that Salt River is not navigable, nor very boatable. Other statements are that refractory slaves used to be punished by hiring them out to row keelboats up the river; that the salt-boilers upon it were rough characters; that river pirates infested it; that after Kentucky summer elections, candidates, victor and vanquished alike, went up Salt River for a rest as far as Harrodsburg springs. The story accepted in Kentucky, and repeated to me by state officials, is that when Henry Clay was candidate for President in 1832, he engaged a Jackson Democrat to row him up the Ohio to Louisville, where he was to speak. The boatman rowed him up Salt River instead, and he did not reach his destination until the day after election, when he learned of his own defeat. An intriguing picture, but one too full of geographic and logical improbabilities to credit.

As one who has traveled upon it, I must dismiss any theory based on the assumption that Salt River, because of shoals and snags and tortuous ways, is difficult for rowboats. It is not. It flows nearly due north and then nearly due west. Windings not delineated on the maps



it has, as all rivers have; but these are not troublesome. As Thomas Jefferson notes: "Salt River is at all times navigable for loaded batteaux seventy or eighty miles. It is eighty yards wide at its mouth, and keeps that width to its forks, twenty-five miles above." The channel is so deep that whenever there is a good stage of water on the Ohio, the biggest steamboats can enter Salt and ascend it a dozen miles to Pitt's Point, where Rolling Fork joins it. Thirty feet of water in the Ohio acts as a sort of dam for Salt, throwing it into pool. With its flow thus husbanded, you can row up Salt River as easily as down. In an account of a battle with Indians in 1788, I find the statement that "the current was entirely deadened by back water from the Ohio to a place near the licks called Mud Garrison"—nearly a thirty-mile stretch.

Salt River has known the steamboat, even though no whistle now wakes the echoes of its shores. A regular line of packets operating out of Louisville served it. From old copies of the *Waterways Journal* I learn that in 1898 the *Scioto* and the *Raymond* were carrying merchandise up the river and bringing down hay, livestock, poultry, fruit, and vegetables. These packets were a hundred feet long and thirty feet wide, and drew three and a half feet of water.

On the steamboat *Southland*, downriver from Louisville, I met the pilot of the last packet in the Salt River trade. His story brings its navigation down to 1913. While not difficult for a flatboat, Captain Singleton said that the river did require some jockeying on the part of a steamboat pilot. To weather a point or bend, he had to back and twist like a farmer turning his horse and buggy around. What he had to watch, he said, was the runoffs, or sudden descents of freshets after heavy rains

upstream. Then he harbored at night behind a point, so that the drift would go by without carrying the boat with it. On one occasion, the water looked so uneasy that he fastened his boat to a stout sycamore in a secluded cove at sundown. Salt River rose twenty feet that night.

I presented myself at the mouth of Salt on a September afternoon after a steamboat ride down the Ohio from Cincinnati, and an overland journey to West Point, which is the point between the two rivers. A rambling little Kentucky town with tall locust trees and double-galleried houses after the Southern style, it may be called a port in the rustic empire of sorghum. There is tobacco in its hinterland, also, and the pungent plants were drying in barns and on outdoor scaffolds as I drove by. Making my way among the tall ragweed, the pink-spiked knot-grass and the branching willows of the bottoms, I found a launch, and a boatman who had ferried travelers back and forth across the Ohio until the ferry road on the Indiana side was closed. Together we traveled Salt River on a sixteen-mile journey.

Though quiet countryfolk still go up and down the stream on errands unrecorded and humble, it was a lonely ride. After we made the first turn, there were no houses, no barns, and only once, where the leafy screen had thinned, the indication of a cornfield. The forests shut us in with a gray-green tapestry of poplars and willows, looped with wild grapevines. Through them small deep creeks came winding, and at the mouth of each, as it seemed, a great blue heron was waiting. One of these ungainly birds went ahead in a sort of antediluvian flight, and was usually seen disappearing around the next bend; perhaps his function in allegory is to be the advance courier of the defeated.

Floodwater in the Ohio had backed into Salt, and for the length of a county the smaller river was in pool, its banks engulfed, its long, canal-like reaches a dozen or more feet deep. Bone-pale sycamores stretched their arms across the stream in a sort of somber benediction. Butterflies, all thoughtless and golden, danced under them, and it were neither pertinent nor proper to speak of the light folly of two snow-white gossamer things, there at the postern gate of summer. More characteristic of the river were the ominous snake-feeders, and black butterflies, albeit their wings were bordered with deep blue, as of half-mourning. Crows called from unseen cornfields; jays sounded in the wood; a flock of wild ducks flew up the river; fish flashed their white bellies in the sunlight and submerged in ripples; small turtles slid from snags into the depths. I pondered the scene, wishing that I could behold the evening mists fill the space between the green walls with their incantations. The ancient ferryman may have thought only turtle thoughts.

He woke up to point out an abandoned buzzards' roost, a sun-bleached crag, white with the ribs of dead cedars—and as I fancied a promontory of disillusion. Two great black birds circled above it, dumb sextons of nature, gatekeepers of oblivion. It was what I wanted. We turned and descended the little river which has become a parable and a song.

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## *XII. River of the Delawares*

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THE WALHONDING AND TUSCARAWAS JOIN THEIR waters to form the Muskingum. This may be the most musical group of river names on the continent. There is a rich tradition behind rivers, and here it has been fulfilled. Rivers have their gods; they are sacred precincts to be crossed only after sacrifice; they are highways of commerce and war; they are places of meeting and parting where lovers exchange vows of unavailing remembrance. The burden of the songs which they sing might be called a memory of the struggles and dreams of men.

Where Walhonding meets Tuscarawas, and for thirty miles above, in Eastern Ohio, was the abode of the Delaware nation during the most interesting generation in the life of the Old West. Its contacts in this theater with the white race held poignant moments. Slightest of these is that the Moravian missionary, Christian Frederick Post, took a squaw to wife and lived with her in a cabin where Sandy Creek comes into Tuscarawas. Another incident wrote three names on old maps of Ohio, one of which remains. A chief wedded a white woman who had been captured as a child in New England and had gone quite native. They lived in an Indian town on Walhond-

ing. The town was known as White Woman's Town, the river as White Woman's River. When Christopher Gist was there in 1751, the woman said she wondered how white men could be so religious in New England, so wicked in the woods! Her husband brought another white woman into his wigwam, whom the first wife called the Newcomer. One of the two clove his skull with a tomahawk while he slept; it was the second wife who fled. The village which marks the spot where other Indians overtook and slew her is Newcomerstown.

Near the Forks of Muskingum, where Walhonding meets Tuscarawas, the story of human affections that crossed the lines of races had a romantic episode. Colonel Bouquet came thither in 1764 with colonial troops to receive some two hundred white prisoners whom the natives were required to surrender after the French and Indian Wars. Many of the prisoners did not wish to return to the settlements. White women with Indian husbands, white men with Indian wives, white children adopted by Indian parents, wanted to stay in the woods. With tears and protestations they quitted the old, rude life, and their savage captors wept with them. Some of the rescued borderers later rejoined the tribes.

Farther up Tuscarawas were towns in which Christian Delawares lived under Moravian pastors, while their pagan kinsmen kept a fickle but friendly eye upon them. The Delawares have a reputation for nobility, for misfortunes gallantly carried, for a sympathetic response to the best that is in the white race when the best was presented, and for an epic retaliation when white savagery took off the mask. Cooper helped paint this picture. His inspiration came from the works of two Moravian pastors, Zeisberger and Heckewelder, whose books, written

while they lived and labored on Tuscarawas during the American Revolution, are the best of the early studies of Indian life.

The story of Schönbrunn and Gnadenhütten is a troubled little idyll which, but for that revolution, might have broadened beyond the realms of conjecture. Here red men lived in neat cabins, tilled the soil and raised flocks and herds, while they lifted hymns of praise in the deserts. They renounced war, spoke each other mildly, and out of their plenty fed all wanderers, red and white, who came that way. In the arts of peace the towns were a generation or more ahead of the nearest white settlements. But they were midway between the American outposts at Fort Pitt and the British outposts at Detroit, and exposed to the suspicions and jealousies of both sides. For them the end came when a band of backwoodsmen from Pennsylvania, with professions of friendship on their lips, butchered them all, burned their towns, and carried their scalps back to civilization. For their unchurched brethren, however, the end was not yet. When these borderers and others of their kind invaded the Sandusky country ten weeks later, the pagan Delawares scattered them to the winds, burned their commander at the stake, and with allies from other tribes flung themselves on the settlements in the wildest raids in history.

Something disappeared from the story of man when the Moravian towns were destroyed, something that can never be recalled.

These towns, rebuilt by white men, I saw on a day in September some years after I visited the quaint communistic town of Zoar farther upstream. There is a good Moravian church at Gnadenhütten and a monument to the slaughtered Delawares in the cemetery on the river

bank. At Schönbrunn, a few miles away, the Moravians have brought the beautiful, tragic old town back to life, almost as it was. There I talked to a solitary Delaware who had come down from Canada to see the land of his forefathers.

Of the western waters of the Muskingum I know rather less than of the Tuscarawas, though I have been upon them. The Mennonites live along Killbuck Creek, a tributary of Walhonding. Into this river flow Mohican and Kokosing, and on the former a band of Mohicans from Connecticut built a town. Mansfield was once the home of Johnny Appleseed, the lovable wanderer with the stewpan hat who sowed orchards in the Ohio wilderness when the nineteenth century was young. With two canoes laden with apple seeds gathered at the cider mills of western Pennsylvania he ascended Muskingum, Walhonding, and Mohican, planting the seeds on their borders, and telling farmers to help themselves to the saplings. To this day the Muskingum counties are thick with orchards.

To know the major river into which these streams pour their tribute, we drove southward from the Forks of Muskingum. Coshocton where it begins is a hundred and seven miles from Marietta on the Ohio where it ends; but the headwaters of tributaries carry its story nearly a hundred miles farther north into the portage region. Muskingum is the great river of Ohio. Seldom less than five hundred feet wide, it flows down a spacious, hill-embattled valley. It drains an area of eight thousand miles, it has a constant water stage of nearly five feet, it is navigable by packets from end to end during the spring and autumn freshets, navigable for ninety miles at all seasons of the year.

Such vistas as it offers could not have been in the Indian time, when fallen trees narrowed the view on all but the largest rivers and well-nigh roofed the creeks. One of the first in the country to be subdued to traffic, for nearly a hundred years it has been among the fairest streams of the land, dams and locks impounding its waters and submerging the sand bars and naked beaches seen along most rivers in dry weather. A highway runs beside it down a corridor between the warder hills; it is one of the stately roads of the country.

Some miles below Coshocton is a prehistoric cemetery where a pygmy race is buried. At Dresden, farther down, slack-water navigation begins, and here is the first of the dozen locks and dams which Ohio completed in 1840 and the national government took over in 1886. Here, also, the river was connected with the Ohio and Erie Canal, enabling boats to pass clear through the state between boundary lake and boundary river. Zanesville, where I spent the night, has a V-shaped bridge, one fork crossing Ohio Licking, the other Muskingum; dams on both streams mark the site of obsolete waterfalls.

Most of the Muskingum packets set out from Zanesville, plying to Marietta, to Parkersburg, to Pittsburgh, to Cincinnati, sometimes to New Orleans. Best known of them was the *Lorena*, which ran until well into the present generation. It bore the name of a song which meant as much to Muskingum folk as Paul Dresser's song does to the people of the Wabash. This message to a Zanesville lass, who had jilted her lover and sent him wandering westward, was written in a period when most of the songs which everybody sang—and all of which are yet remembered—came from Ohio. The list includes "Darling Nelly Gray," "Rain on the Roof," "O Susan



nah," "Uncle Ned," "Gathering Shells from the Seashore," "Tippecanoe and Tyler, Too," "Old Dan Tucker," "Dixie," and possibly—though there is debate on this—"My Old Kentucky Home."

When the Civil War broke out, "Lorena" went to the front with the regiments, and into the bivouacs of boys in blue and boys in gray. "The sweetest song ever written," my mother called it, and sweet it is with the thin sweetness of melodeon music, thin perhaps with the beautiful thinness of old silver teaspoons, sentimental as all tunes of that time had to be. It is too long for modern taste, as lyrics of that time were apt to be, but here is the first of its six stanzas:

The years creep slowly by, Lorena;  
The snow is on the grass again;  
The sun's low down the sky, Lorena,  
The frost is where the flowers have been;  
But the heart throbs on as warmly now  
As when the summer days were nigh;  
Oh! the sun can never dip so low  
Adown affection's cloudless sky.

I should like to have gone downstream on a packet, but the tale of Muskingum steamboats ended—at least for a while—when *Lorena* was laid up. Now only a towboat, bringing coal barges from Wheeling, is in major traffic on the river. At Zanesville, however, I saw sand and gravel boats, houseboats, and the government fleet of derrickboats and dredgeboats that keep the channel clear. They stood for a varied and significant chapter of navigation. After the Indian and his canoe had passed, there came something which pioneers called a canoe, but which was more like the warboats of seafaring Kanakas. Tree trunks, sometimes ninety feet long and three across,

were hollowed out, and poled down the river with as much as two hundred bushels of apples aboard. Afterwards came the flatboats, large as a canalboat, which could go downstream but not get back, and the keelboat of a hundred tons burden, which could go in either direction and which took salt to Pittsburgh, and brought back iron, textiles, and groceries to Zanesville. Salt found its main market in the pork-packing houses of Cincinnati. The so-called saltboats were crude, unwieldy flats, sometimes a hundred feet long and twenty wide; they could carry up to five hundred barrels of salt.

There had been steamboats on Muskingum since 1824, when the *Rufus Putnam* made the first trip upstream to Zanesville. Deepening the river brought a heavy year-round traffic. More than a hundred steamboats, all but two or three of them stern-wheelers, took part in it, among them *Jenny Lind*, *Ben Bolt*, *Buckeye Belle*, *Hail Columbia*, *Prairie City*, *Red Rover*, *Nymph*, *Olivette*, *Elk*, *Fox*, *Mink*, *Swan*, *Swallow*, and *Silverheels*. The *Belle Zane* was snagged and sunk on the lower Mississippi in 1845, most of its ninety passengers perishing. The *Buckeye Belle* blew up at the Beverly locks in 1852, with a loss of thirty-two lives.

Steering boats up and down Muskingum before the Civil War required careful navigation. Beacon lanterns on the banks were yet to come. In place of electric searchlights, packets had iron torch baskets in which pine knots or sawdust and resin were burned. Dams and locks were new to steamboat tradition and little known elsewhere. When war came, Muskingum pilots were in demand, and so were their boats. The North pressed these into its service, halting them with a shot across their bows, unloading their freight, and reloading with troops or sup-

plies. Then they were sent with their crews into strange waters—usually the Tennessee and Cumberland—a hazard never undertaken in peace. But Muskingum pilots knew how to handle a boat deftly in narrow spaces.

The towboats and barges which have taken up the story of the packets move every year the better part of a million tons of freight, mainly coal, lumber, cement, stone, sand, and gravel. They carried more than a thousand passengers in the latest year of record. As I drove down the valley, I found a number of small warehouses, public and private landings where roads came in, tipples for loading coal and unloading sand and gravel, paved wharves in the towns, and a large wharfboat at the river's mouth.

Muskingum is another river of history, and long the list of distinguished men who have known it. President McKinley lived on its headwaters. President Garfield taught school at Duncan Falls a few miles below Zanesville. Vice-President Hendricks was born near Zanesville. Vice-President Dawes was born at Marietta. Lewis Cass, candidate for President in 1848, began his career as a state legislator from the Zanesville district. The valley has reared five governors of Ohio, has given governors to Indiana, Wisconsin, and Iowa, and has had sons in five Cabinets at Washington.

Back of these names are generations of pioneer folk who came into the valley after 1788. In the main their story is that of settlers everywhere in the Old West, but here and there it sounds notes of its own. The region was settled by folk who came by canoe and pirogue from Marietta and for years knew only water travel. They made their homes on the rich river terraces, scorning the hills as "rabbit lands." Friendly Indians who sometimes

paused to trade traveled along these ridges on the great north and south trail from the lake to the Ohio. Settlers went upon Muskingum at night with bow torches of lightwood splinters, and speared boatloads of mighty muskellunges. They had corn-cracker mills, fanning mills made of hoop-stuff and deerskin, horse mills, floating mills on the river, and others set up in hollows which were called thundergust mills because it took the runoff of a rain to turn the overshot wheels. In their cabins settlers served apples and cider to strangers. Warmed by thrusting a hot poker into it, and brought to a head with red pepper and ginger, the cider was a drink of power.

On the way down I crossed streams and saw hills, hollows, and hamlets which bore such names as people who have been in close grapple with the earth are wont to bestow. There was a Butcherknife Creek, a Hedgehog Creek, a Cow Run. Hills included Butterbean Ridge, Buzzard Glory Knob, Coffee Knob, Poverty Ridge, Umbrella Rock. Among the hollows were Coopershop, Harmony, Sheep Den.

Now and then along Muskingum towns face each other from opposite banks and a bridge runs between. The effect is of an engaging neighborliness, most marked perhaps where McConnellsville, which is a county seat, looks across at Malta.

The road led us past the scene of the Big Bottom Indian Massacre of 1790, and on to Marietta at the mouth of Muskingum some twenty miles beyond.

There we entered an area which in border times was so skillfully fortified and sturdily held that no Indian dared attack. Long ago, it was something of still greater consequence—a stronghold, a holy city, a capital it may be, of the singular race whose remains are found along

the river valleys of Ohio. Now it is one of the most beautiful and interesting towns of the Old West, with wide streets, with dwellings shadowed by elms in the New England fashion, with well-tended public lawns going down to the Muskingum, and with the Ohio moving past its front doors. I saw the site of Fort Harmar on Muskingum's farther shore, visited the Campus Martius, traversed the noble Via Sacra—the Covered Way of a vanished people—and entered a cemetery where amid graves of Revolutionary soldiers stood a lofty mound of prehistoric time.

When white settlement came in 1788, it was made in the New England way, which was to face the wilderness in the spirit of a town meeting. Kentucky was occupied by individualists clad in buckskin and carrying long rifles, who wanted no near neighbors. Marietta was the creation of former Revolutionary officers who believed in fortifications and teamwork. One of their early ordinances—it was posted on a tree—declares their quality: "Be it ordained that all members must entertain emigrants, visit the sick, clothe the naked, feed the hungry, attend funerals, cabin raisings, logrollings, huskings; have their latchstrings out." Lafayette, who came in 1825, read the list of the pioneers, more than two score of them officers of the Revolution. "I know them all," he cried. "I saw them at Brandywine, Yorktown, and Rhode Island. They were the bravest of the brave." They sleep in Mound Cemetery: Putnam, Tupper, Whipple, Sproat, and their fellows—generals, colonels, majors, captains, one commodore. Though the war in which they fought came to decision on the Atlantic seaboard half a thousand miles away, no cemetery of the East holds the graves of so many men who commanded Revolutionary troops.

Marietta is the oldest town of English settlement in the Northwest Territory and was its first capital. There is a true thing about it, which Russian officials found hard to believe. For years it was a seaport, building twenty-four ships, brigs, schooners and gunboats—some of them of black walnut—and sending them into the outer ocean. In 1807 one of these ships took pork and flour to New Orleans, cotton thence to London, British goods thence to St. Petersburg. There it was seized because its papers showed it had cleared from Marietta, and no such port was known. It was released when the captain's finger traced on a map the course of the Mississippi to the mouth of the Ohio and the course of the Ohio to the mouth of Muskingum.

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### *XIII. Where Men Grow Tall*

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BEFORE ME WAS A BROAD RIVER WITH THE SUNSET LIGHT upon it. A narrow one which seemed to have a good deal of water in it, backwater I surmised, was on my right, and already the shadows claimed it. Standing on the bluff where the Hocking meets the Ohio, I looked across to the bottom corn and pastured hillsides of what was once Old Virginia. Then I looked beyond the smaller stream to the hamlet of Hockingport. Once upon a time this was the shipping port for the whole lower half of the Hocking valley. It seemed pretty quiet now. Great gravel heaps, however, proclaimed one active river industry.

When the historian Reuben Gold Thwaites descended the Ohio in a canoe, more than a generation ago, to what he called this "dreamy, faraway port," he lay in the shade of its blacksmith shop, which was also the ferry-house with a bell rope dangling between posts for travelers to pull. "Years ago," he declared, "there was some business up the Big Hocking, a stream of a half dozen rods' width, but now no steamer ventures up—the railroads do it all." A valley history of a little earlier date lists three churches, three cooper shops, a sawmill, a hat shop, a cigar factory, a normal school, and a hotel that

was also a post office. I made no industrial survey of the port, but am sure not all of these survive.

What remains is the right to remember. George Washington records that in 1771 he spent a night on the meadows "above the Great Hockhocking River" on his return up the Ohio from a trip to select lands for soldiers of Virginia who served in the French and Indian War. Here Lord Dunmore, colonial Governor of Virginia, and his army encamped in 1774 on their way to Pickaway Plains to dictate there the terms of peace that concluded the Indian war which bears his name. Here he built the palisaded earthwork of Fort Gower. I saw the bronze tablet that marks its site. It is memorable for enigmatic resolutions drawn up there by Virginia officers in that army on their way back. They were serving under a British earl at a time when the first Continental Congress was meeting in Philadelphia. For three months they had been buried in the woods. Their countrymen had a right to know on which side were their sympathies.

So they passed resolutions warmly thanking Dunmore, and then went on to profess allegiance to King George "while his majesty delights to reign over a brave and free people." "But," they added—and probably Dunmore was expecting that always significant monosyllable, "we will exert every power within us for the defense of American liberty . . . not in any precipitous, riotous or tumultuous manner, but when regularly called forth by the unanimous voice of our countrymen."

From Hockingport in the evening hour we rode up a sweet and intimate valley that in places was only a quarter of a mile wide. Like every minor river of Inner America, the course of Hocking is a succession of long, still pools where you could swim, and brief riffles of rapid

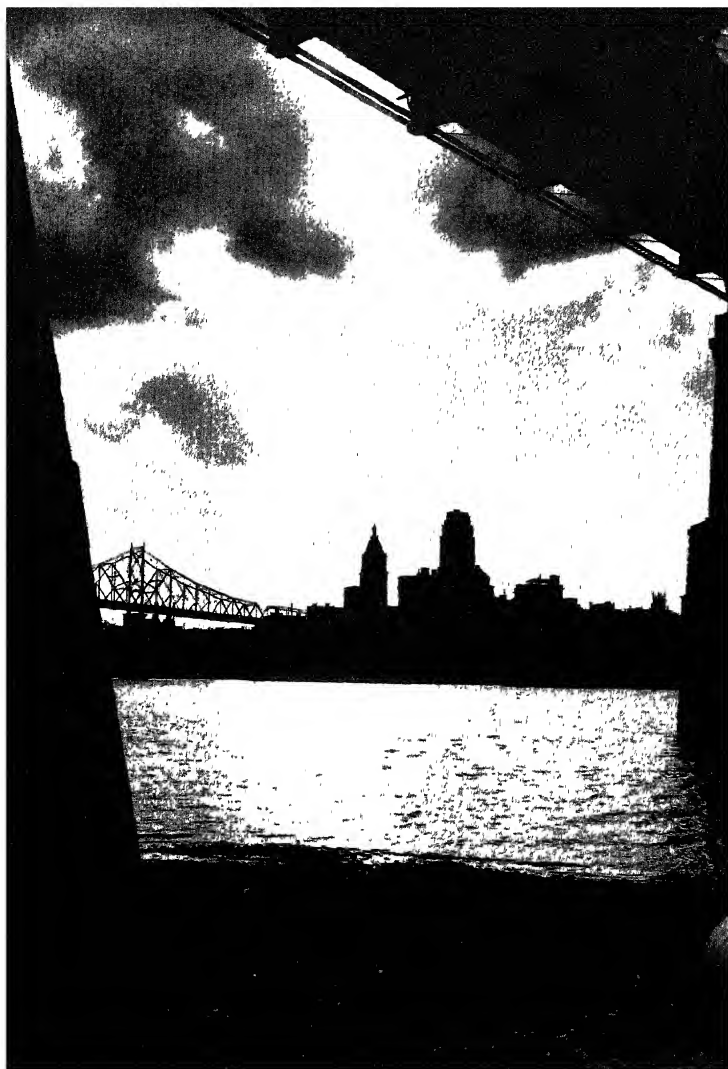


water not knee-deep. Once we crossed an old, red covered bridge, with a milldam above it, and paused to watch some fishermen there. Crickets were shrilling in the meadows and the evening star was large in the sky when we reached the college town of Athens.

After a late dinner I went to a street carnival on a meadow beside Hocking, and there for a while I adventured with the natives among the canvas-walled lanes of the pitchmen, the tents of female dancers whose mission is to liberate something or other in the breast of the bucolic male, the flaring lights, the tumults, and all the tawdry glamour of the oldest mass entertainment in the world.

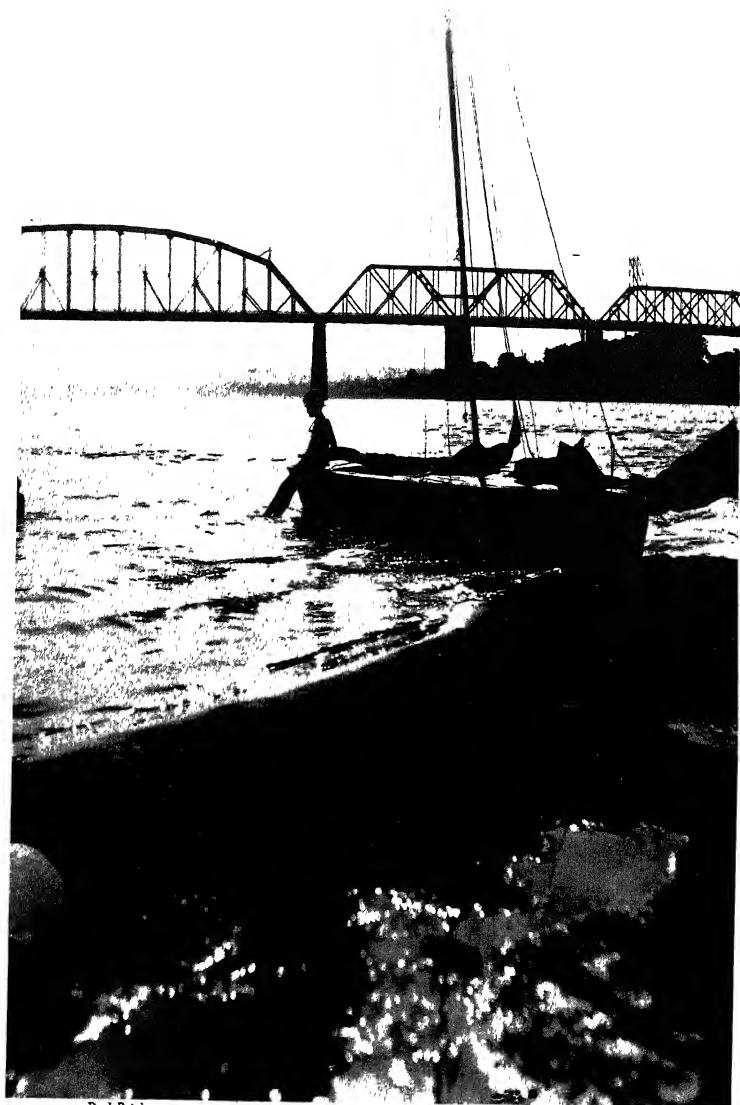
The next morning I looked over Athens. It is a pretty college town with winding, shaded streets on a hill that commands the valley of Hocking. Here is Ohio University, and the summer term was on. This was the first college chartered in the Northwest, and the first class to receive degrees, that of 1815, had its most illustrious graduate, Thomas Ewing, Whig statesman, twice Senator from Ohio, member of two Whig Cabinets. Now it has twenty-five hundred students.

Leaving Athens, we set out for the gorges of Hocking. Winding with the river, going around hills rather than over them, the road offered vistas that kept shifting. Truckloads of tree trunks rumbled by. I saw two women in black sunbonnets hoeing in a cabbage patch. There were rail fences, and bluebirds on them. Off in a meadow was a covered bridge by which an invisible road crossed an invisible creek. Now and then we had to stop to let a covey of confiding quail pass over the road. Twice the chance was offered to take girl hitch-hikers aboard, young things in bathing suits or pajamas.



Paul Briol

The modern buildings of Cincinnati (once called "the Ragtown of the Roustabouts") are framed by the structural units of one of its mighty bridges.

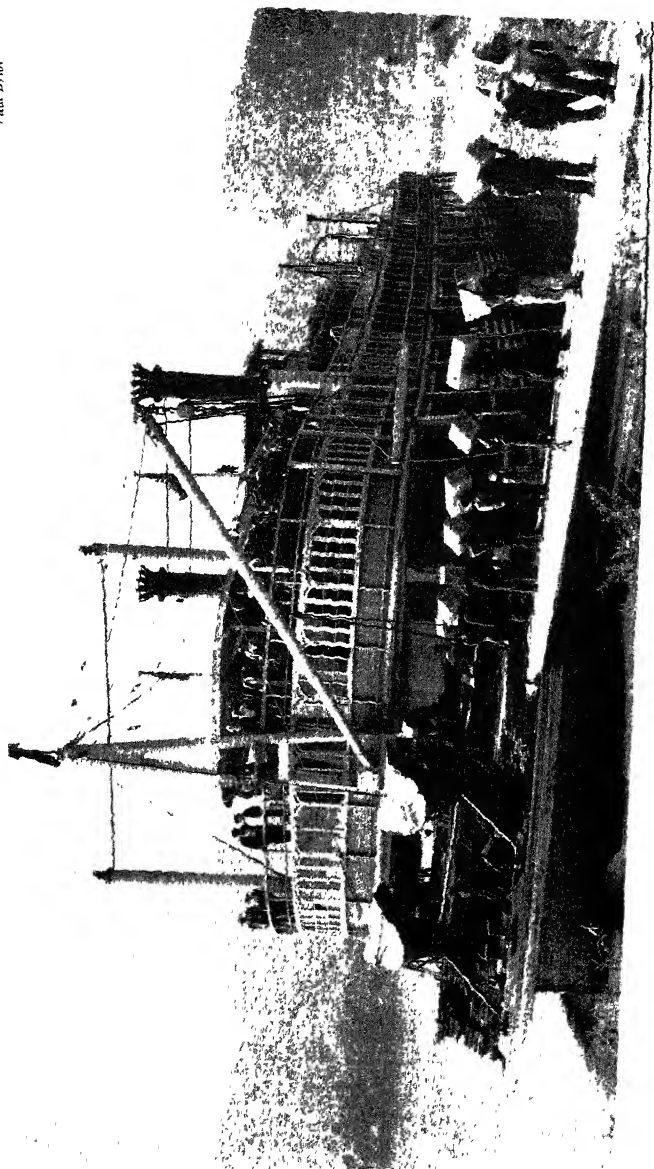


*Paul Briol*

With their boat resting on a sandbar, these children of the river take an early morning swim in a diamond-studded pool.

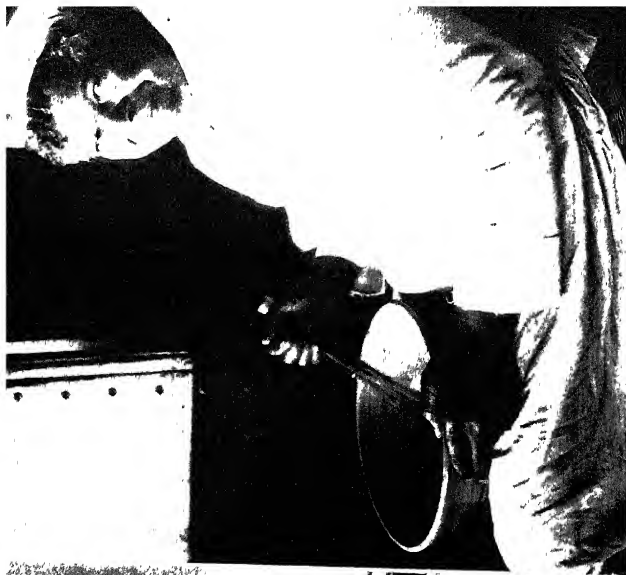
The long line of roustabouts shuffle down the landing stage, a work song at their lips lightening the loads on their shoulders.

Paul Brinot





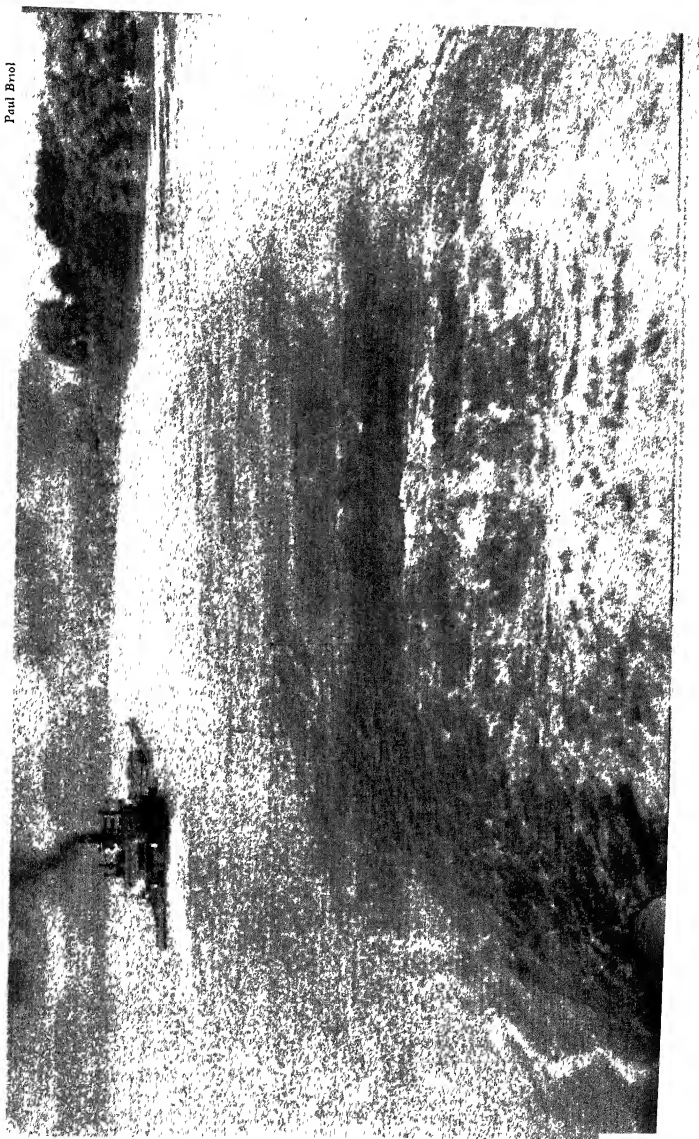
Now they roll the bones. In an hour they will roll barrows of coal with equal gayety.

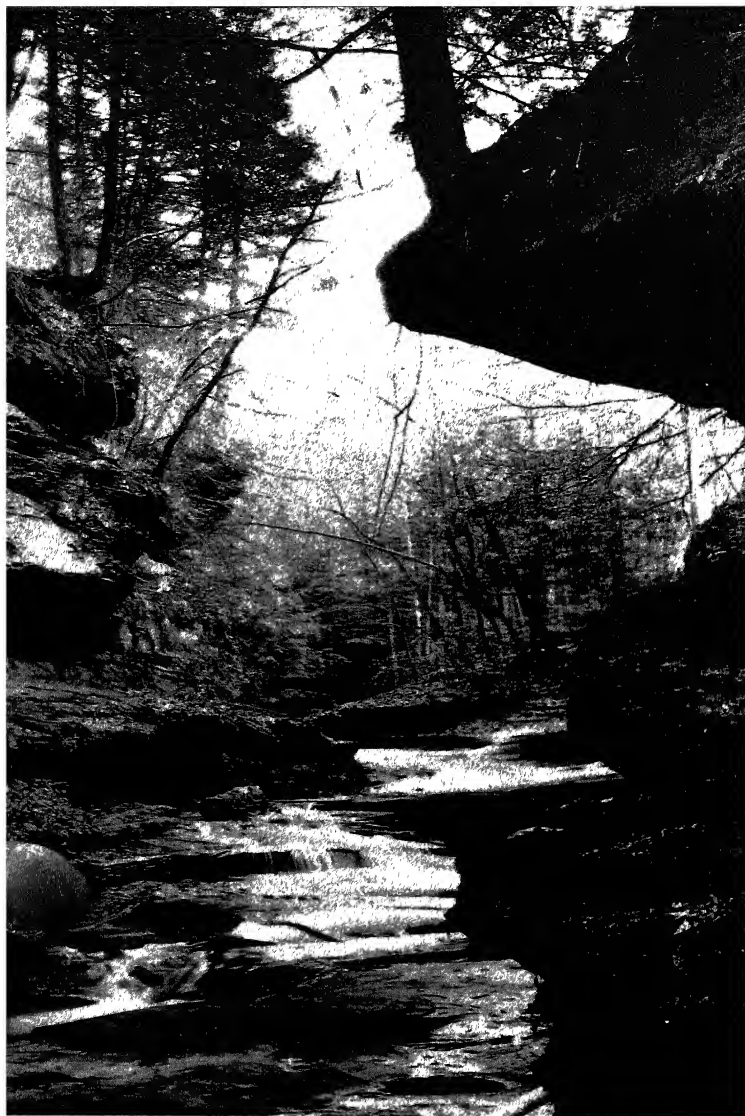


*Paul Briol*  
No wonder he has a look of self-satisfied complacency. He knows that as long as he can call "Come and get it" and serve his steaming biscuits and bacon and eggs he will remain the most

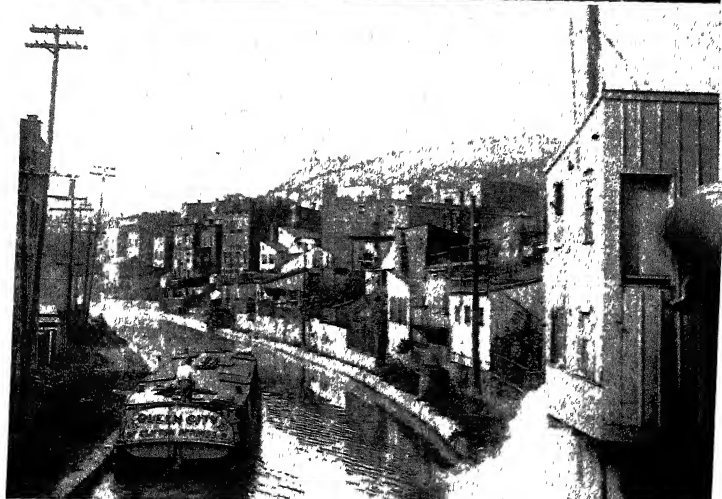
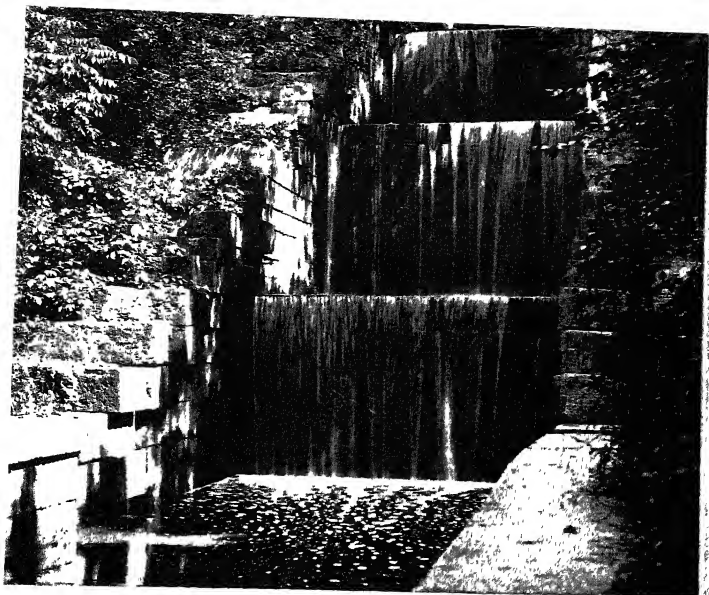
Behind us the rollers from the stern wheel spend themselves in lace-like splendour.

Paul Brol





Down to the placid river creeks find their ways through the rocks, carving grotesque records of their passages, such as this at Old Man's Cave near Logan, Ohio.

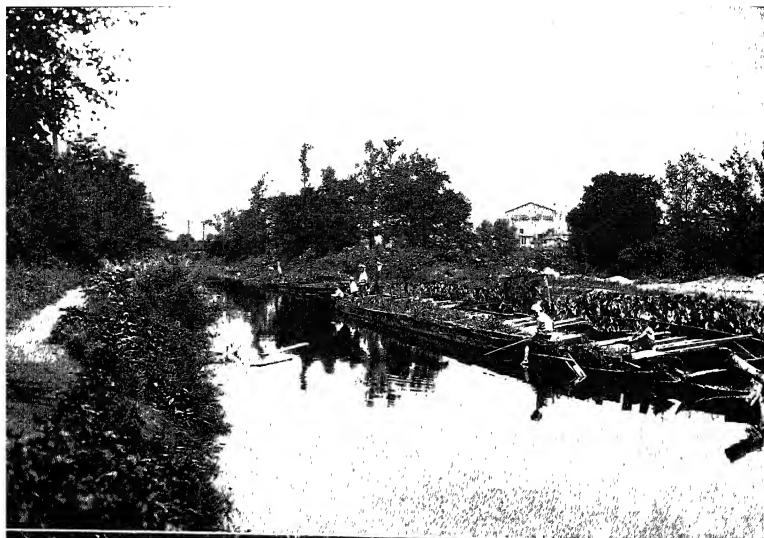


Times-Star

re spillways on the Miami  
 and engineers have created a  
 as graceful as any which

(Below) Like a highway of old Venice this  
 canal wound its placid course past the back-  
 doors of Cincinnati.





*Times-Star*

(Above) Wrecks of the past, abandoned canal boats furnish ideal stimulants to the river dreams of children.

(Below) A span of the lovely bridge at Vincennes frames in stone the Clark Memorial.

Was a band of gypsies migrating? Repeatedly we passed parties of these swarthy men, these women with crimson scarves and golden ornaments, moving along the road or encamped beside it. What affair of Egypt engrossed them? I wondered, and perhaps looked wistfully at them, as is the way of men when they see folk wandering who seem to have so little and are so content with it. It is said that gypsies have no words for duty and possession, and another thing they lack: once, they tell you, they had a religion, but it was written on cabbage leaves, and a donkey devoured it. Out of these lacks comes gypsy music, which is like nothing else.

Going slowly around a bend, we found some of the band under a tree that overhung a little stream. A Carmen of the roads came forward. Not her thumb but a finger was raised, and we stopped. Could she have the loan of a cigarette? She could.

We halted at Nelsonville, coal center, as John Morgan, Confederate raider, had done before. He did not tarry long, for Federal cavalry was only four hours behind. A local account describes his force as "dirty and ragged, and an extremely hard-looking set of men," a picture that would pain Bluegrass Kentucky whose best families had sons among them. In their stay they made forced trades of jaded horses for fresh ones, fired the bridge over Hocking, and burned a dozen canalboats which lay in port there, giving the families that lived in them scant time to get out.

In those days the canal brought salt and coal out of the valley. Starting at Athens, it joined the Ohio and Erie Canal a few miles southeast of the state capital. When a railroad came, its trade dwindled. Hocking floods—the river has the quickest water in the state—made

gaps in the canal which it was never expedient to repair. Only here and there could I mark its uncertain course in the fields.

Logan, an attractive county-seat town, had the air of being threshold to something important. I have known such towns in the Catskills. It is the eastern gateway to the gorges of Hocking. To visit them we turned westward into the hills. They are named from the county rather than the river, and lie just over the divide, their streams reaching the Scioto.

For nine miles we drove through a rolling pasture land loud with meadow larks. Halting at a grove, we walked to the edge of a ravine, and descending a flight of rude steps found ourselves in a twilight world. Vertical walls from sixty to a hundred feet high framed a wild, romantic glen. Out of it hemlocks and beeches, with moss on their trunks and ferns at their feet, grew straight and tall toward the sunlight, and only its checkered pattern fell on the canyon floor. Swallows had their nests in the cliffs. Ants scurried over the leaf mold, flies whined above them, the spider spun her web in the crevices, and far overhead the cicada whirred in the firs. Everywhere was the sound of falling water. It dripped from the overhanging rocks, dropped from pool to pool, flashed down a ledge into a wide basin, and sent back a murmur from retreats where we did not care to follow it. The sound of falling water in lonely places is a solemn thing.

This was Old Man's Cave, so called, no cave at all but a gorge too spacious and splendid and difficult for the habitation of a very old man, even a holy hermit. Ash Cave, some distance beyond, is an amphitheater flanked by bastions, with a stone proscenium arch from which a

trickle of water falls far; it stands at the head of a glen where beeches tower to majesty in the shelter of precipitous walls. Rock House, on a canyonside a few miles away, is a true cavern with columns, windowlike openings, and a vaulted hall. Notable though little known are the gorges of Hocking.

I turned back to the valley of Hocking and followed it toward Lancaster. It has an unusual course, all of it within the irregular parallelogram formed by the Scioto from Columbus down, and the Muskingum from Zanesville down. Beginning a little east of the Scioto, the stream ends a little west of the Muskingum, with the result that one river has taken most of the western tributary creeks in its upper stretches and the other has taken most of the eastern creeks farther down. Yet Hocking drains an area of four thousand square miles.

This is a Yankee valley, the first settlers driving their canoes up Hocking from the Massachusetts colony at Marietta. New England influence is seen in bookish place names and Biblical baptismal ones. The valley-folk were pious, intemperate, keen for learning. Some of the schoolteachers were roving, dissipated Irishmen. On the waters of Hocking was founded what became widely known as the Coonskin Library—not that the books were bound in coonskin, but that the pelts of bears, wolves, foxes, and raccoons bought them. The furs were sold in the East to agents of John Jacob Astor.

At the county town of Lancaster I went up a street which comes down to the square and looked at two dwellings which stand near each other. One was the birthplace and childhood home of John Sherman, the birthplace of his brother, William Tecumseh Sherman. The other, a spacious residence with Colonial doors and columns, wide

yards and a wall in front, was the home of Thomas Ewing, who adopted Tecumseh when the death of his father, a friend and benefactor of Ewing, left him an orphan lad of nine. There is a tradition, confidently proclaimed in Ohio, tolerantly weighed elsewhere, that mentally, and often physically, Ohio men are of a superior breed; the names of eight presidents are cited in proof. The two houses, and the three tall men who lived there, might be the genesis of the tradition.

From Lancaster I went no farther, taking somebody's word that there was nothing above; it scarcely looked as if there could be. When I learned that there was, I wrote the *Lancaster Eagle* and the *Logan Republican*. From the former I learned that the falls at Rock Mill, which give the river its name, are ten miles to the northwest, and that its source is six miles above that point. The editor of the Logan newspaper drove thirty miles to take a look at the falls.

Delaware Indians called the river the Hockhocking, or bottle river, after the only bottle they knew, which was the gourd. As the books record, above the falls the waters contract like the neck of a bottle-shaped gourd; below, they expand like its body. With characteristic economy of nomenclature, the settlers named the slender river the Great Hockhocking to distinguish it from a smaller stream called the Little Hockhocking, and later contracted it to Hocking, with some loss both in music and in meaning. The Indian name is one of a curious series of ricochet words, all beginning with the same letter, and occurring seemingly in every language. The imprisoned echo is heard alike in Hockhocking, Hackensack, Hoboken, Hottentot, hollyhocks, homo, hootchy-kootchy, helter-skelter, and hotehpot.

The Logan editor's journey brought out something quaint. Where the Great Hockhocking gets its name it flows through a gorge only four feet wide; but it tumbles thirty feet and widens out into quite a basin. This confirmed a random observation set down in my notebook: "More by its length than by its breadth is Hocking a river."

Like myself, the editor doubted the navigability of Hocking. A veteran river captain, born near Hockingport, whom I met aboard a packet at Cincinnati, said that for sixty years he had known of no boat on the stream. "But," he added, "I have heard my father say that in high water packets used to go up Hocking, perhaps as far as Athens, and bring down cattle." That seems to settle it.

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## *XIV. A Haughty Passageway*

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BEFORE IT TURNS SOUTHWARD, THE SCIOTO FLOWS EASTWARD. Passing over from the Hocking, I picked it up at Columbus after it had straightened out for a hundred-mile journey so nearly due south that it might be called a moving meridian. Back of the State capital was another hundred miles of sycamore shores, for its source is near the Indiana line. Thence it takes its casual way along a watershed itself so casual that in Kenton they point out a house where a drop of rain, falling on the roof ridge, has equal chance of reaching Lake or Gulf. Though disastrous floods have roared down it, all the old books speak of the Scioto as a placid river.

At Columbus the Olentangy comes in, and suddenly the Scioto assumes the estate of the guardian river of a commonwealth. I thought of the Seine in Paris with its sculptured bridges and marble palaces, and quays where students browse in bookstalls. Eight bridges span the Ohio stream as it sweeps in a deep curve from horizon to horizon. Stone walls confine it, and back of them is a noble boulevard, back of the boulevard an arresting group of public and semipublic edifices—the new State Office Building, its free treatment of Greek forms embodied

in white marble; an insurance building with a tower that commands a distant skyline; two handsome city buildings, and the Doric mass of Ohio's Capitol. Terraces, balustrades, fountains, and reflecting pools complete a picture which proclaims that whenever a city approaches a river in a respectful mood the river will double in its depths the best the city has to offer.

Political dignities come to it out of a distant past. No other valley has so many monuments of the mound-builder culture, such evidences of a numerous aboriginal population. Thrice along the river, at the Lower or Shannoh Town at its mouth, and at Old and New Chillicothe below Columbus, the Shawnees, fiercest of Western tribes, built their capitals; one of the Chillicothes became for a while the seat of Ohio's government. One of the homes of the wandering Wyandots was at the Forks of the Scioto, as they called the site of Columbus. Six great Indian trails, now railroad routes, radiated thence. At the Forks of the Scioto, so red men thought, was the abode of power, and tradition had it that nowhere was cornland so fertile nor game so abundant as in that valley. Wherefore they gave the stream a name which in Shawnee means "the river of deer."

As far back as 1775, Pownall, British governor of Massachusetts Colony, noted that the Scioto was "passable with large Batteaux a great way up, and with Canoes nearly 200 miles to a Portage near the Head, where you carry over good Ground Four Miles to Sandusky." So also says Cramer. The encyclopedias speak of the river as navigable for one hundred and thirty miles at high water, and but for its bridges it would be, and in his magazine article on Katharine Cornell, Alexander Woollcott thought that it was.



There is something more to say. Thirty flatboats were built at Columbus as early as 1810 and sent downstream, loaded with grain and pork, to the New Orleans markets. For years thereafter the setting forth of these fleets in the spring freshets was an event among the river towns. In Chillicothe's rowdy period, keelboats brought in whiskey from the Monongahela stills to satisfy the thirst of former soldiers and camp-women of Wayne's army who had settled there. In 1821 the packet *Tiosco* plied between Piketon and Ripley on the Ohio, fifty miles below the Scioto's mouth. There is a story that a seagoing vessel, built at Columbus and laden with foodstuffs, went down the rivers and across the sea during the Irish famine of 1846-1847. At about the same time, three steamboats, the *America*, the *Relief*, and the *John B. Gordon* were put on the Scioto between Piketon and Portsmouth. They ran only in high water and only for a year or two, and sometimes they got up as far as Chillicothe. The last commercial boat on the river was a small, smart-looking packet called the *Piketon Belle*, which drew only twenty-two inches of water; she was in trade between October, 1860, and May, 1861.

In default of a low-water packet to carry us down the Scioto, we drove south on the ancient Columbus and Portsmouth turnpike, which keeps to its valley and at every county-seat town crosses the river or comes out upon its banks. Through the long summer afternoon and until noon the following day, we sought out the stream, halting on bridges to scan it, walking out upon bluffs that overlooked it, viewing it from forts and altars of the mound builders, turning off into hills that it mirrored, detouring at last to the towpath of the old canal that ran beside it and entering a forgotten world.

Caleb Atwater, earliest Ohio historian, calls the valley "as fertile as any can be in the world." What we found at the outset was a thriving prairie land vaguely framed by distant low-lying hills. Corn was tall upon it, and wheat in shock, and men and boys were bringing in the hay; cattle were ruminating under straw-thatched pavilions. These were blooded cattle. Below Chillicothe is a granite boulder with a bronze tablet, and on the tablet a medallion with the head and shoulders of a shorthorn bull. It is a state monument to a breed of beef cattle and to the pioneer cattle raiser Felix Renick, who brought the earliest herd to America. Into the Scioto country came the first imported stock in the Northwest, and out of it for a generation cattle moved over the rude roads to the Eastern markets, the drovers perhaps stopping at the Bull's Head Tavern in downtown New York, kept by one Daniel Drew.

The first county seat we reached was Circleville. It is so named because the white settlers built it inside a group of prehistoric earthworks, laid out in an intricate pattern of squares and circles with watchtowers, mound-guarded gateways, and high, moated walls—all on so spacious a theater that for a long time it looked as though the white town would never grow out to the limits of its aboriginal predecessor. However, it leveled them anyway, with the pioneer's barbaric disregard of yesterdays not of his own making. Without stopping we went on to Pickaway Plains a few miles below, an ancient prairie land that was set down in the forested wilderness. Above everything in the Old West, Howe calls it Classic Ground.

Its claims to this distinction are that here lived Cornstalk, noblest of Shawnee chiefs, and his Amazonian

sister, the Grenadier Squaw; here a savage nation held its council fires and immolated its captives, and here the words of a wronged Indian made an army of Virginians, come to dictate peace on their own terms, forget they had won a war, their hearts dissolving in admiration and sympathy. "Who is there to mourn for Logan?" concludes a speech no longer than Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, and of the same quality.

We found the answer in a place of quiet beauty, an irregular amphitheater with a brook running through it, and hills about it from which cocks echoed each other. Cattle lay under distant trees and mourning doves made a plaintive music above them. There were two monuments and an elm tree a hundred feet high, twenty-three feet around. One monument carries the speech; the other offers an alibi for a man mistaken for the white miscreant who had slaughtered an Indian's family and left him alone in the world; the tree is the Logan Elm; the inclosure is the Logan State Park. America has forgotten Lord Dunmore's War, but has elected to remember Logan, and through the ages to offer a monumental expiation. Not deeds but words—the right words—are immortal.

We spent the night at white Chillicothe, capital from 1800 to 1803 of the Northwest Territory, and twice thereafter capital of Ohio. A town of elm-shadowed streets, it is a place of memories in a noble setting. Dominating the plain from the other side of the Scioto, and seven hundred feet above, is Mount Logan, which is pictured on the great seal of Ohio. Not far away is what is called Mound City, a city without inhabitant, and instead of houses a score of green hillocks rising inside a low earthwork. The prehistoric people who lived

there saw the Scioto at its best—a reach of calm water perhaps five hundred feet wide, with wildfowl winging among the willows that fringed it, and steep bluffs above.

I knew those river terraces, for in 1917 I had spent a day upon them, when two thousand buildings lined twenty miles of streets, and ten thousand mules and horses neighed in the stables, and forty thousand lads were training for service overseas. I saw American boys drilling, digging trenches, currying horses, sitting at mess, skylarking in the barracks, singing in chorus, dancing with visiting sweethearts in a wide wigwam. My heart was the theater of emotions common to Americans then—excitement, and pride, and anger at the foe—and the spectacle of officers in horizon blue, wounded while holding the Allied line and sent over by France to help train our young men in trench warfare was an overpowering thing. Now, as I passed the crumbling shacks of Camp Sherman, it was as if a flood on the Scioto had washed away landmarks within me as well as those along its banks. The war was something that had happened. Time is the only deluge.

From Chillicothe to its mouth fifty miles below the flow of the river is a drama. Other streams rise in the hills and complete their journey through low meadows. The Scioto rises in a meadowland, and just above the old territorial capital passes into a tremendous valley, flanked by high, blue hills which are almost mountains and some of which bear mountain names. One range is the escarpment between the Allegheny plateau and the Central lowlands. The other is an array of rugged knobs which merge at length and meet the Ohio in a mountain mass. The summits of these ranges are too steep for cultivation or occupation. Hardwood trees—

maple, oak, hickory, ash, and walnut—clothe them. Between them, its valley far wider than the Ohio's, the Scioto moves through lands of almost legendary plenty. Along this haughty passageway the winds of empire seem to blow.

In our morning drive to Portsmouth we turned off into one of the state forests and climbed a hill and a watchtower, whence we looked far over the wooded flanks of the knobs. Beside the road some miles farther on, we found the cave of the Hermit of the Scioto, a low rock house where a Virginia recluse, whose wife had been unfaithful or his kinfolk too greedy in partition of an estate, lived for fourteen years "while all was a wilderness around him," as a small monument recites.

This was in Pike County, where if anywhere one would expect to come across hermits. When we reached Pike-ton, former county seat, we looked around for a while, for the Pike counties of America are among the last strongholds of border quaintness. From the back of a kitchen garden we saw the Scioto making a pleasant noise between banks where wild grapevines roped the elms together. Just below the town was the far-famed Graded Way. The turnpike follows it between earthen walls eight hundred feet long and in some places twenty feet high, and trees stand on them. This may have been the ancient flood channel of a creek, but an unremembered race made it over for purposes unguessed.

In a house in Piketon we examined a collection of long, muzzle-loading rifles, some of them product of forgotten wilderness smithies. One was fitted with a cherrywood stock made from an old railroad tie. Another had a barrel bored out of the axle of a motorcar. These guns, and others like them, are used in shooting matches up among

the hills of Pike and its neighbor counties. The muzzle-loading shooting iron has come back in that part of the world. Old ways have never gone out.

I have camped in those hills. They are in the Virginia Military Grant. Virginians, and other borderers dissatisfied with the confused land titles of Kentucky, were their first white settlers. Hunting big game, felling big trees, fabricating hoop-poles, and cutting bark were early occupations. This is still wildest Ohio. Save for the valley turnpike there are few roads, and for nearly fifty miles only one good east-and-west highway crosses.

Along the base of the upland country ran the canal. We crossed to the Scioto's western bank twenty-five miles above Portsmouth and followed a good towpath road down to its mouth. Opened in 1827, the canal kept to the valley of the Scioto until a few miles from Columbus, with which a feeder connected it; thence it moved over to the Ohio, Licking, Tuscarawas, and Cuyahoga valleys, reaching the lake at Cleveland. A great traffic moved upon it a century ago. For some months, as a lad of sixteen, Garfield was a mule driver on its upper stretches. The best account of travel upon it was written by Maximilian, Prince of Wied, who made the trip from Portsmouth to Cleveland in 1834. To the German prince the hills of the lower Scioto were mountains, the flatboats "four-cornered chests." He counted fifty-one "sluices" (locks) from the Ohio River to the Licking summit level. Covered bridges he deplored as waste of timber.

I found two somnolent canal villages, with broken-down locks in their squares. The rest was countryside asleep in the backwaters of a dimming past. Cows pastured in the old canal bed, chickens scratched there, king-

fishers scanned the pools, little fork-tailed bank swallows flitted over them. Fences had been thrown across the canal, and a number of small causeways, bridges, and footways spanned it, to give farmhouses their own approaches to the towpath road. Some of the locks had all but disappeared, and doorsteps, hitching blocks, and outside stone chimneys showed what had become of them.

When we crossed the Scioto over a bridge of many arches we were in Portsmouth. A short distance beyond, the river entered the Ohio. So did the canal a little farther down, and a mile below was the ancient mouth of the Scioto. On the other bank the hills of Kentucky towered six hundred feet above high-water mark. Here, in 1751, Christopher Gist saw the Shawnees do the tribal Dance of Divorce, when all marriages were dissolved and new ones contracted. From a cliff on the Kentucky side, the Shawnees kept watch for passing flatboats and took a cruel toll. Now, in the mountain-guarded plain where the rivers meet, there is a city of forty-two thousand inhabitants.

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## *XV. Small and Friendly*

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A HUNDRED MILES BELOW THE MOUTH OF THE SCIOTO, and at the upper edge of Cincinnati, the Little Miami enters the Ohio after a southerly journey of about a hundred miles. "It affords no navigation," says Jefferson. Wherefore all the early travelers who came down the Ohio passed it by, contenting themselves with the remark that it was sixty or seventy yards wide. It is a small and friendly river, with few places of consequence upon it; but for long distances on its banks lie the summer camps of Cincinnatians, who lead there a sort of muskrat existence, swimming, fishing, and moving out or upstairs during the periodic inundations.

It serves a fertile valley, the granary of the aborigines. Riding through it three generations ago, Dickens noted "the labyrinth of stumps," and the "ugly and primitive worm fences," but found it "a beautiful country, richly cultivated." It still grows great crops of corn, and corn means hogs. The land between the two Miamis made Cincinnati for a time the pork-packing center of the country, and gave it the almost forgotten name of Porkopolis.

Of the small towns upon this small river, it may be



said that their names are signboards pointing backward. Shaker Village was the seat of the Shaker Church in the Old West. Lebanon was the home of Thomas Corwin, one of the group of great Whigs whose eloquence made up for their party's lack of a durable political creed. Yellow Springs was an antebellum watering place. Camp Dennison trained Civil War armies. The cartridge plant at Kings Mills made munitions on a large scale in the World War. Other hamlets grew up beside mills where wheels no longer turn, blacksmith shops where anvils no longer clink.

My memories of the river are of camping, boating, swimming, tramping, and casual historical searches along its modest course. Everywhere it makes an agreeable picture with its screening willows, its graceful old iron bridges, its long pools of sleeping water. More has happened upon it than one might guess, for the first Americans lived their lives beside small rivers.

Once I heard of a tunnel mill on its East Fork, near Williamsburg, ancient capital of Clermont County, and set forth with friends to find it. The farm which was our point of departure was carved from the Virginia Military District and had belonged to William Lytle, Revolutionary general and ancestor of the Civil War general who wrote, "I am dying, Egypt, dying."

"First," said our host, "let us look at the courthouse, jail, and post office."

These were all farm buildings. The courthouse, a small stone structure of the late eighteenth century with walls nearly two feet thick, had become a hen roost; two small built-in walnut cupboards, which had held the records of the infant county, looked about as good as ever. The structure had also been a land office. The jail, now

a tool shed, was a cubical stone cell no bigger than a well house; it is said that a whipping post stood before it where horse thieves were flogged. As to the post office, we ate a good country meal in it as guests of the household. It is the kitchen of a farmhouse; the letter boxes have become the kitchen cupboard. The political monuments of a whilom county seat might be put to less worthy uses.

About a mile from the farmhouse stand the ruins of the tunnel mill. We saw the rock-framed spillway which led to the river, the sturdy supports where the wheel swung, and the grooved masonry in which the sluice gate was fitted. Above this, a well-built tunnel, stone-walled and roofed, four feet high and three wide, ran under the road and into the hill.

Why the tunnel, and why a mill at the lower end? Small rivers have an irresponsible way of winding around and coming back to about where they started, the result being some descent to the level of the sea but no great progress over the surface of the earth. East Fork flows back on itself in an outline more like a hairpin than an oxbow. It is only about eight hundred feet across the neck of the land, and yet by water it is nearly three miles around, and in its meandering course the bed of the stream has dropped perhaps fifteen feet. That is the head of water which the tunnel brought through the hill to grind corn and wheat some generations back.

Also I made a pilgrimage to Fort Ancient. Generals Arthur St. Clair, Anthony Wayne, and William Henry Harrison built log forts in Western Ohio and made history within them. Yet mound builders and not white men erected the strongest fort in the region, and placed it at perhaps the most strategic point of the aboriginal Amer-

ican world. The effects of beauty and significance, which the Little Miami sketched at Fort Ancient, they filled in. This mighty stronghold stands on a sort of mesa, like those occupied by the cliff dwellers of the Southwest. Three hundred feet below winds the Little Miami, another of its iron bridges giving an artist touch to the foreground; the wooded slopes beyond, with the long reaches of tranquil water at their feet, complete a view in which the innate quality of the Ohio scene is revealed with more fidelity than almost anywhere else. Sheep graze on the green embankments of the Fort. The bones of two races, one long-headed, the other broad-headed—perhaps conquerors and slaves—have been found in its ancient burial places. There is enough room inside the walls of circumvallation to set up half a score of cities the size of Troy.

It may have had a similar story, taking toll of traffic along an ancient trade route, gathering within its citadel in time of war the numerous populations of the valley, sheltering successive nations of the polished Stone Age. Only empire, or religion, or both, could have done so great a thing. But although the history of the hill-top nations may loom as large beside the deeds of the white armies that marched below as their stronghold loomed beside the little timber castles of the Old Frontier, nobody knows what it is.

Once I went far up the valley of the Little Miami, and got to a place where you could step across the river; measured by its meanderings, this was perhaps ninety miles from the mouth. It was a journey through a historic region, along an old warpath of the Indian world. The day may have been the beginning of the season which is called squaw winter. With their withered plumes

bobbing in the wind, the corn shocks had the appearance of a huddle of aged aboriginal warriors wrestling over a spoil that lay in golden heaps along the furrows. Scarecrows bowed and scraped there in an empty civility, and the undeluded crow hovered overhead.

I stopped at Old Town, the full name of which is Chillicothe Old Town. It is one of several Ohio communities that bore the same resounding appellation; de Tocqueville was impressed with what he deemed the pompous nomenclature of the American savage. For a time this was the capital of the wide-wandering Shawnee nation. "The most conceited and warlike of the aborigines," Daniel Drake called them. Shaler described them as "a kind of Hun." Among other tribes, curiously enough, they were known chiefly as salt makers, yet they were redoubtable fighters and what Shaler calls "somewhat forethoughtful men." The devastation of Kentucky was largely their work.

Old Town and its savage inhabitants figure in the careers of the two most romantic characters of the Border. Here Simon Kenton probably ran faster than any white man in this country ever ran before. He had to, for he was a prisoner, and two lines of Shawnees, armed with clubs and knives, formed a gauntlet through which he sped to the temporary refuge of their council house; I located its site near an old brick mill. Here, also, Daniel Boone was a prisoner in 1778; but he was of middle age, and the Shawnees, who were fond of him and proud that he was their captive, put him to no ordeal—unless it was an ordeal to be taken by their giggling squaws to the Little Miami, stripped, and scrubbed clean of his white blood.

The Shawnee ladies plucked out all his hair except

a scalplock, baked a dog for him, and assigned one of their own number as mistress of his wigwam. After living with their nation for some months in great apparent content, he slipped away to notify the settlement of Boonesborough that his red brothers were going to attack it. There he was court-martialed on a charge that he was a better Ohio Indian than he was a Kentucky Nordic. Nothing was proved against him, but one can guess that this son of the wilderness was more at home with a Shawnee brave than with either a North Carolina Quaker or a tidewater Virginian.

Yellow Springs, some miles to the north, is one of a number of defunct resorts which are scattered over the Old West, and which testify to the three major interests of the Fabulous Forties: self-medication, speculation, and summer flirtation. Physicians were of no great sagacity then, and there was much in their talk about "effluvia" in the atmosphere, and "humors" in the blood. To cure the humors and to escape the effluvia, Americans sojourned in the dog days at places where there were mineral springs, to whose waters various virtues were imputed. The men gambled a good deal and the women—not their wives then, but their daughters—flirted more than a little.

Farther to the north, the Little Miami flows through a splendid gorge with rock houses like those of Kentucky. A little beyond, and near the village of Clifton, the gorge narrows into a chasm. Here, for a course of about three miles, the river is confined between steep limestone cliffs, sometimes sixty feet or more in height, in places so narrow that Boone is said to have leaped from rim to rim. If he did, he leaped right back again, for the Shawnee squaws were on the other side, and he was to be the life

of the party. There were places, however, down beside the water, where we could have stepped across the river. A deeper green than its sentinel cedars, it slept in long, chill pools on which the autumn leaves were eddying, or flashed down over rocky shelves with the inner tumults of a laboring mill.

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## *XVI. Seat of Aboriginal Capitals*

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FOR A HUNDRED MILES AND MORE WITHOUT PAUSE, three of us rode north from Cincinnati. The peace of August lay upon the slumbrous countryside of Western Ohio. Heavy-eared corn rows, clover fields ripening a second crop, stacks of newly threshed oat straw, reddening orchards—a horn of harvest plenty had been poured on all the land. Animating the scene were rotund white-faced Herefords, elliptical swine, triangular poultry, here and there a flock of well-fleeced sheep. In the background were older, shyer inhabitants of Ohio, among them the turkey vulture balancing far overhead, crows winging at lower levels, and not far from the ground, the white-tailed meadow larks. It was a picture that could be repeated, item for item, over half of rural America.

Then we crossed a threshold into something else. It was high prairie country with a hint of things hidden beyond its horizon. By ways aloof we entered it, skirting marshes heavy with rushes and lily pads, on little bridges crossing lagoons of clear brown water, following a lane overarched with willows, coming out at last on a wooded ridge that commanded a broad expanse of

afternoon water on which sailboats were running before the wind. It suggested Jamaica Bay, that curious amphibian domain with its numerous islands, its salty little resorts, its houses on stilts, and its rialto-like wooden bridges over streets of water where Long Island people come and go in flat-bottomed boats. What was wanting to complete the resemblance was the daily drama of the flooding and ebbing tide. This was Indian Lake, the thing we sought.

Ninety years ago, the Miami, large brother of the Little Miami and neighboring it on the west, was dammed and embankments were thrown across the lowlands in order to provide a feeder for the Miami and Erie Canal. Thus a lake of nine thousand acres came into being, all the high points becoming islands. There are sixty-eight of them, and some are as large as an Ohio farm. With the lapse of years nature has made over shore and basins in its own likeness. Flocks of gulls visit the lake, and mallards and wild geese stop there. Fish abound, mainly bullheads, crappies, and two kinds of bass.

After supper we drove along the darkling lake, and came out at Russells Point, three miles away, into a blaze of light, a blare of music, a steam of hot dog savors. Dancing was proceeding on a pavilion floor. Framing the tumults of the resort, the waves chafed at the sea wall and slapped the canoes and gondolas that crowded in front of it.

During my sleep that night, owls were talking in the oaks outside. Morning brought pastoral noises, the sound of oarlocks, wind in the elms. A procession of ducks was waddling around the hotel. The mingled piping and squealing of grackles told of a treetop convoca-



tion. Across the lake flashed a kingfisher, toward shores so remote that one saw only the barrier wood and not the dwellings it shadowed.

The ways of the kingfisher are its own, but by road one can win to the same shores; we set forth after breakfast in search of them. Part of our journey was along a causeway, with the land on the outer side well below the level of the lake. Through one resort after another we passed; there are more than a score of them, some upon the main highway, still others at the very end of fingerlike capes. We turned up lanes that led to them, driving a mile or more through the forest before we came out on bluffs with cottages standing in a semiclearing, and beyond the log abutments and boat landings, broad gleams of water. Weedy bayous led into it; underfoot were the mud castles of the crayfish. Back of the forelands was a rather lonely farm country, populous only with ducks and geese. Traversing it and the little cape roads, we went thirty miles\*in encircling the lake.

Indian Lake is the most interesting thing that survives of the vanished canal navigation west of the Alleghenies. Before canalboats ran beside the Miami and the Maumee from Cincinnati to Toledo, there was the canoe, and the flatboat. At the headwaters of the Miami, St. Marys, and Auglaize rivers was one of the great portages of primitive America. Over it Twightwees, Shawnees, and Wyandots bore their light skiffs from river to river on a path that in wet seasons was only six miles long; in the country adjacent they had their seats of power. In the flatboat period, beginning with 1799, craft built as far upstream as Piqua carried farm products to the New Orleans markets. In 1827 came the canal, reaching the peak of traffic in 1851 and declining

thereafter. While I was seeking out the headwaters of the Wabash in the portage country on another trip, I found stretches of it in fairly good repair, with lock walls and gates intact, and with flower boxes abloom on the bridge parapets. At Fort Loramie it is a long pool in the village square with a stone bridge across it and lawns on either side.

Once they called the valley the Miami Slaughterhouse. It had known the expedition of Celoron de Bienville in 1749; the cannibal raid of Northern savages on the trading post at Pickawillany in 1752; Clark's punitive expedition in 1782 against the cluster of Indian towns at Piqua, and the marches of Harmar, St. Clair, and Wayne in 1790, 1791, and 1794 with their several vicissitudes of disaster, repulse, and decisive victory. The canal then came to run its placid course beside a river of violent memories. Built in the time when there were only poor dirt roads, it canceled the tradition that whatever entered the state sold at a high price, and whatever left it sold at a low.

Boats were from seventy to eighty feet long and fourteen feet wide, and four feet of water was under them. The largest would accommodate more than a hundred passengers, or as many as a river packet. To do this, beds were made up on the tables and floor as well as in the bunks, and clotheslines on which travelers hung their garments crisscrossed the cabins. The fare, including meals and berths, was five cents a mile. Fast boats might make about three and a half miles an hour. There were also slower, cheaper boats corresponding to railroad way trains; freight boats corresponding to freight trains, and household boats, corresponding to covered wagons, in which emigrant families moved from place to place.

Pioneering in a crude art movement which flowered later in the pictured wheelhouses and ornate cabins of the steamboats, boatmen sometimes painted their craft red, white, blue, green, or yellow.

Along the canal between the northern and southern boundaries of Ohio flowed the life of a simpler century. Boats carried cargoes of flour, whiskey, beer, pork, corn, coal, lumber, and merchandise, as well as passengers. There were circus boats, picnic boats, showboats, floating saloons. People swam and fished in the canal, skated upon it, builded election bonfires along its banks. In its Cincinnati course, it became known as the Rhine because a district thickly settled by Germans lay beside it. Theaters and summer gardens where good food and beer were served at moderate prices, and where there was excellent music and adequate acting and singing, made a night Over the Rhine something to remember.

Though the canal dwindled and slowly died after the railroads came, the great manufacturing towns in the Miami valley are its monument. The main cities of the valley—to all of which it brought power and population—are Cincinnati, Hamilton, Middletown, Dayton, Springfield (on Mad River), and Piqua.

Before the most tragic memory in the region's history came a pastoral interlude. Not long before the Battle of Tippecanoe in 1811, the celibate Shakers entered the lower valleys of the two Miamis, departing thence in 1914. I have been to their old home on the Dry Fork of Whitewater. It is not noted on modern maps, the Shakers are gone, and their massive buildings are now ordinary farm dwellings. Here, as elsewhere in the Ohio valley, it was demonstrated that a communistic society could succeed—if Shakers ran it. With dance and

dogma they gleaned in the wake of the great Kentucky Revival and the camp meetings that followed it, and then they settled down to work.

Their buildings were large because they housed, not single families, but phalanxes of forty or more individuals each. Roomy were their barns because the Shakers pastured numerous herds of blooded cattle over an area of some fourteen hundred acres. They fattened hogs; they split rails, and made brick for their own use; they dried fruit and sweet corn; they expressed sorghum and cider; they had a sawmill which was also a gristmill; they fabricated brooms and mats and straw hats; they had fish ponds, and they even reared silkworms. But they did not rear children, and so they faded out.

At five places in the Miami valley are dams and gated spillways where high water can be diverted into lowland meadows enclosed by levees. No houses or barns stand in these lonely meadows, but cattle graze there, and peace broods over them. The dams can hold back a river stage of perhaps fifty feet. When they were put at the service of the valley, terror passed from its cities.

In the last week of March in 1913, one of the greatest disasters in American history descended upon the region. It was heralded by curious electrical phenomena in the West, out of which storms paraded in rapid succession. Sparks flew from windmill to windmill, from wire fence to wire fence; when men shook hands, they were shocked. In five days nearly ten inches of rain fell over the Miami watershed on a soil already saturated by the winter snows. It all ran off. What moved into the river towns was not the backwater that makes a flood on the Ohio or the Mississippi a sluggish inundation. It was headwater, and it was wild, knocking over

houses and uprooting trees in the cities, digging trenches twenty feet deep through the farmland. The Miami, shrunken descendant of a great glacial river, winds aimlessly in a narrow channel which it has cut for itself in the valley of its mighty ancestor. In that March the glacial river reappeared, reached a stage of thirty-five feet, and for three days thundered down the ancient course.

Though church bells rang and factory whistles blew in warning, it came too suddenly and moved too fast to be eluded, and fire came with it. Civil government disappeared in Dayton, regiments of troops were sent in, martial law was proclaimed. Twelve thousand houses were inundated, eighty-three thousand persons were fed in one day by relief agencies. How many lives were lost will never be known, but three hundred and sixty bodies were recovered.

The great dams and the lonely meadows stand as the memorial of the disaster, the pledge against its recurrence.

The Miami ends nobly, after a journey of a hundred and forty miles. Not far above its mouth the White-water comes in from Indiana through a broad and beautiful valley. From the grassy ramparts of Fort Hill, which commands the meeting of the rivers and stands high above them, I surveyed both. The valley of the Miami is ampler than the Ohio's. Within it are yellow, overflowed lands subject to yearly inundations, meadows with sloughs in them, benches which show farm acres and dwellings and the steeples of village churches, and beyond them wooded hills. In this spacious region the Miami shifts from side to side in wide meanders, its vertical banks showing signs of frequent cave-ins. More

than a little it looks and acts like the Mississippi; but the hills frame it in statelier fashion. Near-by is the village of North Bend with memories of two presidents—William Henry Harrison, who lived there and whose monument is beside the Ohio; Benjamin Harrison, who spent his childhood in his grandfather's home.

Within the mile-long walls of Fort Hill, I found ash trees, elms, and locusts, and one sycamore nearly twenty feet around. The stronghold incloses twelve acres, has a strategic position, and was built by some race whose arrowheads are in the fields below. That is about all there is to say. Compared with it, Fort Finney, set up by white men at the foot of the hill in 1785, was no more than a log shed. It is easy to believe that at the mouth of the Miami in the old time there stood a savage capital outmatching anything which the Indian nations of a later day reared at its source.

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## *XVII. Highway of Old France*

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YOU WOULD CALL IT RISING GROUND RATHER THAN A hill or even a bluff. As I stood there, my gaze fell upon the broad meadow below, with community gardens where sweet corn and tomato vines had reached the prodigal fulfillment of midsummer. The meadow ended at a narrow, weed-grown creek. On the near side, and almost at my feet, was an abandoned waterway which had the semblance of a trench. Behind me was a village with a tall monument standing in a square. The creek was the Wabash River, so small a thing that it had been no trouble to shift its course from one edge of the meadow to the other. Scarce a mile to the west was the state line. The Wabash is Indiana's mother stream, but it mingles its headwaters with those of the Miami whose lower reaches I had just explored. Its beginnings are in Ohio.

The Wabash begins tragically. The little town bears a bravely reassuring name given it by Mad Anthony Wayne. It is Fort Recovery, but it stands on the site of Camp Destruction. There a doomed army, which had set out from Fort Washington at Cincinnati to march to the seat of the Miami power at the Forks of Maumee

in Indiana, was trapped and butchered by a force of Miamis, Delawares, and other tribesmen which met it quite halfway. What befell on that November dawn in 1791 was a dreadful thing. Two elderly, gouty officers of the Revolution who were not friends had brought into the wilderness a makeshift army composed of good regular troops, untrained, underpaid levies from the streets and prisons of seaboard towns, and a force of militiamen who deserted by dozens daily, taking the back track to Kentucky. Behind this motley array was a niggardly Congress, dishonest contractors whose axes would not cut wood and whose powder would not burn, and a commissary whose supply wagons could not keep up. To forestall deserters from looting these, half the regulars were sent back on the very eve of battle.

Fourteen hundred men and some two hundred women—camp followers and soldiers' wives—slept on the low promontory overlooking what is now a meadow, while a savage force under Little Turtle stealthily took position in the surrounding thickets. A scouting party had reported their approach to Butler, second in command. "Go to your tents," he said. He did not inform the commanding officer, for he hated St. Clair too much to do so, and the dawn attack took the army unawares. By nine o'clock in the morning it was all over. An unseen enemy picked off the soldiers with musket fire, or darted into their ranks, tomahawked and scalped, and fled back into the brakes. There were brave, unavailing bayonet charges from which the men returned with thinning numbers. At length the army broke into disorderly flight and carried St. Clair with it. The last seen of Butler, he was sitting disabled in his tent, a loaded pistol on either side, and savages entering. For four



miles the warriors pursued the fugitives, their tomahawks rising and falling. Then they went back to loot the camp, or perhaps nobody would have escaped. Nine hundred white men were killed or wounded. None of the women was ever seen again.

Driving north from the battlefield with a companion to another of the sources of the Wabash, I traversed a peaceful countryside dotted with the spires of great Catholic churches. This was a portage land in the old time, and therefore a land of swamps, and canals, and sluggish, uncertain waterways. When peasants from the Low Countries along the North Sea came here a century ago, they knew themselves at home. They subdued the damp wilderness, prospered as farmers, and built engaging little towns—Minster, New Bremen, St. Marys, Celina—over which the sound of church bells floats continually. Many of their inhabitants still use the Plattdeutsch of the homeland—a quacking speech, nearer akin to English than the popping High German of the courts. They have large families, which remember and sometimes regard the tradition that one boy should become a priest, one girl a nun. For a score of miles on my journey I was never out of sight of church towers. Now and then we stopped to study the statues guarding their thresholds, and the long naves and painted windows within.

All of these towns lie near Lake St. Marys, and out of it on the western side Wabash waters flow. From the eastern side it served the abandoned Miami and Erie Canal. So that it should, a number of small Wabash tributaries were dammed some ninety years ago, and a lake came into being which nature has long since made its own. The pretty town of St. Marys is upon it. In the churchyard

lies August Willich, who commanded the armies of the German Revolution in 1849, and after adventures in many climes ended his days among Ohio folk of his own speech.

We went westward into Indiana, and the Catholic churches followed us. Pretty soon we were in the land of Limberlost. A stream near the Ohio line which bears that name was but a ditch through the meadows. The town of Geneva had a sign proclaiming that it is on the Limberlost and that Gene Stratton-Porter had lived there. "Limperlost and Lobditch come together south of here," said a native. Lobditch and other ditches have banished the swamp which figures in the writings of a zealous nature student and vivacious storyteller.

I was on the way to Fort Wayne, and though once or twice I crossed the Wabash—still a narrow realm of willows and sand bars—I bore to the north and away from it. Fort Wayne is nine miles distant from the nearest Wabash waters and at the head of another river; but by that token it has a high place in the Wabash story. Passing a monument on the site of the fort which Mad Anthony Wayne built there, I reached the point where St. Joseph and St. Marys come together to form the Maumee, or Miami of the North. Here began one of the great portages of early America—the land bridge of a lakes-and-rivers trade route by which, more than by any other, the French and English in turn held together a sprawling colonial empire.

With only a nine-mile carry from the head of the Maumee to Petite Rivière, a tributary of the Wabash, boats could pass from French Canada on down to French Louisiana, stopping at all the trading posts of the Mississippi valley which lay between. The portage has been

called the Appian Way of the Indian world. As early as 1679 the French were on it. In 1699, Iberville conducted a colony of Canadians over it, en route from Quebec to New Orleans. By 1712, the Miamis had taken possession of the country about it. They had carts, pack horses, and porters to convey the canoes, furs, and merchandise of traders from one river system to the other. On all these major portages between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi were trading posts, council fires, camping grounds, bake ovens, forts, altars, cemeteries. In the sonorous Miami idiom this was the glorious gate through which the good words of the chiefs had to pass.

When Colonel Hamilton came from Detroit in 1777 to capture a small American outpost at Vincennes, he used this route. In his entertaining account he pays tribute to a colony of beavers whose dam raised the waters of Petite Rivière so that his batteaux could pass.

After a night at Fort Wayne, I went across the state of Indiana, following the direction of the Wabash, which is southwest, and touching it here and there. It is a great river though shrunken from the majesty of early maps. The French called it the Ouabache, and until the middle of the eighteenth century mapmakers held that, instead of being an affluent of the Ohio, it was the main stream, entering the Mississippi where Cairo now stands; the Ohio was merely its eastern tributary.

In its course through Indiana, no less than when it flows along the boundary of Illinois, the Wabash is a dividing line. North of it, until the fourth decade of the nineteenth century, were the villages and reservations of the Indian nations—Miamis, Kickapoos, Pottawatomies, and Mascoutins—from which the state is named. That area was settled later, not so closely as Southern Indiana,

has fewer towns, and has contributed little to the Hoosier tradition of poets and novelists. Indiana letters are supposed to begin in the latitude of Crawfordsville, but Indiana history follows the Wabash. Because France was there before the older states of Ohio and Kentucky had white inhabitants, that history antedates theirs by half a century.

Outstanding historical points along the river are the battlefield of Tippecanoe above Lafayette; Ouiatanon just below Lafayette; Fort Harrison above Terre Haute; Terre Haute itself, and farther down Vincennes and New Harmony. Least remembered of these is the Indian stronghold of Ouiatanon, which commanded a strategic point on the Wabash. There the bark canoes which came down from Canada by the Maumee portage gave way to heavier boats used on the lower river and the Ohio. It was the head of deep-water navigation, as was Lafayette itself in the steamboat age. Indian towns dotted the surrounding prairie, and at Ouiatanon on a high hill opposite the mouth of Wea Creek was a fort "sanded like the Tuileries," says a French writer in 1718. Below the fort were leagues of Indian corn, pumpkins, and melons, and beyond were prairies filled with buffaloes—known as "Illinois oxen." In the villages was incessant play and dancing. It is recorded that their inhabitants, the women well garbed, the men nearly naked, used "a vast quantity of vermilion." There the French established in 1720 their first fort and trading post on the Wabash, a few of their families living with the soldiers.

At Covington, a mile or so from the Illinois line, the river bends to the left and flows nearly due south to its mouth. I bore still farther to the left and went to

Turkey Run a few miles east and south. There I found virgin forest, a creek with cliffs under which people were bathing, a deep, winding glen that was cool even in mid-summer, and a serene brick inn which the state had put up. The resort is in a land of covered bridges. In this and the two neighbor counties, sixty-four bridges, the oldest dating from 1852, span waters which flow to the Wabash.

Terre Haute, where I spent the night, is on a high bluff on the banks of the Wabash. Hence its own name—and the name of a song, almost the best known of all river lyrics, written by a man who lived there. On the way to the city I passed Paul Dresser inns and filling stations, and drove over a Paul Dresser bridge. The next morning I went down to the shore and crossed to the other side for a view of the river, which was perhaps three hundred yards wide, with water where a steamboat would have been at home. On the Terre Haute side, the Dresser Drive winds for a few blocks; beside it is a canoe harbor in a lagoon. Though the most pictorial line in "On the Banks of the Wabash" recites, "Through the sycamores the candlelights are gleaming," the city has set out poplars along the drive.

The first two lines of the Dresser lyric sketch the Indiana scene—waving cornfields and "woodlands clear and cool"—as you find it at Terre Haute and all the way down the river to its mouth. At the Wabash the forests marching west met the prairies marching east, and woodlands and cornfields stand for both. There is much in old books of travel about each—more about the prairies, which were a new thing to men who came out of the shadowy wilderness. Beyond the Wabash began what was called the Grand Prairie, and Volney

called the American Tartary. The smaller prairies on its hither side were only a few miles wide. Then a creek with wooded banks came into the Wabash and another prairie began. Hundreds of these prairies were only large enough for a few farms.

Around them were borders of plum, crabapple, and persimmon trees entangled with wild grapevines, and papaws with fruit "larger than a turkey egg." An English traveler likened the prairies to "large gentlemen's parks, with groups and groves of timber as if planted to give the finest effect of scenery." Numbers of prairie chickens frequented them in winter. There were coyotes which preyed on lambs and young pigs. Deer and buzzards were thought to have a feud with the rattlesnakes, the former killing them by jumping on them, the latter by fluttering their wings and releasing an evil scent. Swamps were known as wet prairies and their wooded knolls were called islands.

In them were pelicans, swans, and sandhill cranes "wild and noisy," which when wounded would fight dogs. On the river banks the trees were like towers. "The Plane with its long white arms," says Captain Blaney, "and the Tulip-tree, called by the Americans the Poplar, attain to an enormous magnitude." There were handsome walnut trees which settlers used for fence rails because the wood split easily; every window sash also was of black walnut. These forests were alive with green parroquets, which seemed to delight in screaming. Flocks of passenger pigeons fed on the mast at the oak openings, depriving the swine of their provender. "Never did I behold such ghostly pigs," says William Faux.

Ghostlike also were the inhabitants. A prodigal nature held some curse in its bosom. For a generation

everybody along the Wabash was ailing. Faux speaks of the "indolent, dirty, sickly, wild-looking inhabitants." Their lives, says Morris Birkbeck, were "whiled away in a painful state of yawning lassitude." This was imputed to the "effluvia of these shores," to the rotting weeds that "impregnate the air with pestilence," to the hardships of the journey from the older settlements, and the want of suitable foods, medicines, and housing. That mosquitoes were infecting the settlers with malaria nobody knew until generations after; nor did anybody dream that white snakeroot bred the mysterious and fatal "milk-sick." Let Theodore Dreiser in his *Hoosier Holiday* write the happy ending. He found the lower Wabash valley "a lush Egyptian land—not very cold in winter and drowsy with heat in summer." In its inhabitants he remarked "a ruddy roundness in face and body."

Faux noted that the Wabash is wider than the Thames at London. Richard Lee Mason called it "a bold and handsome river." So it is from Terre Haute down. The whole stream is a little more than five hundred miles long, drains an area of thirty-three thousand square miles, forms the boundary between Indiana and Illinois for a hundred and twenty miles, and enters the Ohio about a hundred and thirty miles above Cairo. It varies in width in its major reaches from four hundred and fifty to thirteen hundred feet. Because of its low, caving banks and broad bottom lands, some of it is miles wide in time of flood; there is record of steamboats which lost the channel, entered creeks, and wandered in the woods far from the river. At such times, says an old writer, "a goose could have swum across a township."

That story belongs to the era when settlers had merely highwater communication with the outside world. The

earlier fur trade was by canoes and always found water enough, but the flatboats which succeeded them had to wait for the spring freshets. Between 1820 and 1840 it is said that nine-tenths of the surplus products of Indiana reached market by flatboats—too high a claim, for that also was the heyday of the packets.

There are men alive who have brought grain out of the Wabash in steamboats. For a good part of the year these could still ply on much of it. Low bridges rather than low water stand in the way of through river navigation. Before these were built, packets ascended as far as Peru, Indiana, which is three hundred and sixty-six miles above the mouth of Wabash, and smaller craft as far as Adams County, which is four hundred and twenty miles above the mouth.

The first steamboat to reach Terre Haute was the *Florence* in 1822, and cannon greeted its arrival. In the following year came the *Ploughboy*, a "painted wonder." Thereafter packets multiplied, among them the *Victory*, *Paul Pry*, *Daniel Boone*, *William Tell*, *Facility*, *Fairy Queen*, *Science*, *Republican*. In one season sixty packets made the round trip between Terre Haute and Lafayette. Many of them had also Ohio River trades, and some went down the Mississippi. One upbound Wabash steamboat pushed beyond Lafayette to Logansport, because settlers of the latter town said it was on navigable water and called it a port; to make good the claim, a river captain worked his boat over the sand bars, with some aid from a team of oxen.

After the packets came more pedestrian craft. The Wabash and Erie Canal, was the most ambitious enterprise in the story of inland canal building. It made connection with the Miami Canal in 1841, which brought it



to the lake at the mouth of the Maumee; it reached the Ohio River at Evansville in 1853. Below Terre Haute it kept away from the Wabash; above, it followed it. It was four hundred and fifty-eight miles long, and none other in America stretched so far. But it was badly constructed, its financing visionary, its outlook foreclosed by the state policy of permitting the new railroads to parallel it. Soon after it was completed, it began to decay. At Terre Haute its effective period was less than a score of years. It was abandoned by 1874, and many canal towns died with it.

Though for a generation it was a nightmare of debt for Indiana, yet by making contact with the Great Lakes and the Erie Canal it had performed a significant service. Because the commerce of the Old West started with flatboats which could go only downstream, inner America had looked to the Old Southwest, and New Orleans was its market. Though the steamboats could go upstream, their traffic also was mainly with the South. The canals of Indiana and Ohio turned the direction of trade and travel quite around, and thereafter the Middle West looked to the East instead of the South.

Not at all of the East, nor yet of the South as we know it, but of French Canada and French Louisiana was Old Vincennes, far below Terre Haute on the Wabash. Volney speaks slightly of its inhabitants as he knew them in the eighteenth century. "Their time is wasted," he avers, "in trifling stories of their insignificant adventures and journeys to *town* to see their friends." In a footnote he explains: "Thus they speak of New Orleans, as if it were a walk of half an hour, though it is fifteen hundred miles down the river." Yet it would appear that any body of men in the American

wilderness who could talk so lightly of such a journey was worthy of attention. This I gave Vincennes some years ago, when I spent a day there in communion with its past.

After an incredible march through drowned lands in dead of winter, George Rogers Clark and a hundred and seventy backwoodsmen appeared at Vincennes before a British garrison from which his policy had cut away both the French colonial and the Indian worlds. The capture of Fort Sackville in February, 1779, brought to a triumphant ending the campaign which he began with the seizure of Kaskaskia and Cahokia on the eastern bank of the Mississippi. His adventure, most historians are agreed, won the entire Northwest Territory to the American flag, and gave it the prospect of reaching the Pacific.

I saw the site of Fort Sackville on the Wabash banks, where the national monument to Clark has since been erected. To get a better view of the river, I crossed to the Illinois side over a shaky wagon bridge since superseded by the Clark Memorial Bridge. The river was at least two hundred yards wide, moving rapidly, and almost in flood, with sycamores nodding in the current and drift descending it. At the water's edge was a floating fish market.

Both a river and a prairie town, with wide, well-shaded streets, attractive dwellings, a history that goes back nearly two centuries to French beginnings and has been lived under three flags, Vincennes is a place of perspectives, and good novels have been written about it. Among the things which I saw were the century-old cathedral with its tall spire and conventional Renaissance interior, a little yellow and stained with time; the cathe-

dral library with its five thousand volumes, half of them printed before 1700; the cathedral close with its monuments to forgotten bishops, and the garden of corn, beans, and potatoes into which it merged; the substantial and sightly brick mansion which was the home of William Henry Harrison when he was governor of Indiana Territory; the first legislative hall of Indiana, "built like a barn," the tenant said; the site of Francis Vigo's home, and the spot identified with the heroine of Maurice Thompson's novel, *Alice of Old Vincennes*.

The French period is reflected in the names of streets, and of leading families. I saw one old dwelling built in French style, a log cabin made over into a frame cottage, with a front of stucco upon lath. One good French dish survives, a pancake called a *crêpe*, almost paper-thin, baked to plate size, and served with maple syrup. Shrove Tuesday is the special day for the dainty; when you ate it then, belief was that the itch—chronic border affliction—would not trouble you for a year.

Eighty miles down the Wabash from Vincennes, I came to the town of New Harmony, which was famous a century ago because two communist societies occupied it one after another. The first were seven hundred celibate Württemberger sectaries under George Rapp, who built massive houses, mills, and barns, raised ample crops, thrived in a joyless fashion, and after ten years sold out and removed to Pennsylvania. The second were followers of that singularly accomplished, philanthropic, and vocal Englishman, Robert Owen, so-called father of English Socialism, and they, too, were about seven hundred strong. So distinguished were some men and women who came down the Ohio in a keelboat to join the colony that it became known as the Boatload of Knowledge.

Knowledge of farming and trafficking, however, was no part of its cargo. After three years, during which it devised various schemes for the regeneration of society and entertained curious travelers from all parts of the world, a novel venture ended, leaving the individual achievements of eminent men as its memorial.

I came out on the Ohio at Mount Vernon, a few miles east of the mouth of Wabash, with no good roads between. The best way to read the end of its story is from the deck of a passing steamboat, and now there is none. All I know is that the river washes Posey County—"long a synonym," says Meredith Nicholson, "for any dark and forbidding land"—and follows an unstable course through dreary clay banks into the parent stream. From flood to flood the boundary of two states swings back and forth along it.

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## *XVIII. Through a Prairie Land*

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AFTER A STRETCH OF SOME FORTY MILES, THE STEAM-boat moved out of the Mississippi and into a smaller river. We paused at a town where the rivers meet, and from the deck I watched the procession of black roustabouts carrying goods ashore. In the square of light before the warehouse, natives were standing, dogs among them. After a while we drew in the landing stage and started upstream, the great voice of the boat sending a proclamation along the water.

For a space I observed the river and sky from the hurricane deck, which is the best place in the world to study both. I had seen sunset on the Mississippi and, with the twilight and afterglow, a religious peace steal over the water, which Jesuit fathers must have marked in the long ago. Now I saw moonset on another river, the slender crescent sinking slowly to the treetops and then flickering out, and the candle flame of priestly stars taking its place.

With morning I had a better chance to appraise the waterway on which I had embarked for a three days' journey. The Illinois is a major river. Roughly it parallels the course of the Wabash, but the width of a state

is between. It seems to flow as wide and full as the Tennessee; it is five hundred miles long and drains a basin of nearly thirty thousand square miles. Above Peoria for sixteen miles it expands into a lake, with cliffs about it and islands within it. The diversion of a portion of Lake Michigan's waters has raised mean river depths more than three feet, to nearly ten. So it is navigable to steamboats all the year around from its mouth as far up as Peru, which is not so very far from Chicago.

The significant history of the Illinois, however—and this is true of all but two or three rivers of Inner America—was written by men who followed it in canoes and flatboats and never heard the plash of paddle wheels. Its name is that of a confederacy of Algonquin tribes, a numerous but rather timid folk who got the worse of it in their conflicts with the northern Sacs and Foxes and with the Iroquois. The French were there, missionaries, soldiers, and fur traders, very early, for this was a chief line of communication from Canada. Marquette and Joliet ascended it in 1673; in 1679, La Salle built Fort Crèvecoeur near Peoria Lake; in 1712, the river became the northern boundary of the French province of Louisiana. More than a century later a raw youth guided a flatboat out of the Sangamon into the Illinois and thence down to New Orleans.

Lincoln, who also piloted a Cincinnati steamboat down the Sangamon, would feel quite at home even now on the Illinois. The rivers of the land move in a realm apart. They draw the water-loving trees about them, shrinking alike from the farms, the villages, the blatant highways. They have their own birds and animals. Peace is upon them, and growth and decay, life and death. The name of their world is Serenity. It changes little.

As reticent as any of its sister streams, and more so than most, is the Illinois. There are few towns upon its banks, and only one of which the outside world ever heard. The smaller places vegetate under names borrowed from the four corners of the earth. There is a Rome, a Florence, a Naples, a Havana, a Pekin, a Montezuma, a Matanzas, a Peru, a Chillicothe. These show themselves at long intervals, and meanwhile the river flows through the silences, undermining and dragging in the gaunt, spectral sycamores, washing the shores of islands where moonshine whiskey is made, running back into the woods in long bayous of heron-haunted water. Somewhere behind its largest island is Bath, occupied, so I was told, by "a tribe of whittling whites." There are suggestions of the marshlands of the Deep South, and I am prepared to believe that a strange red bird of which I had but a glimpse was a scarlet flamingo. Why not? The Florida pelicans come this far north.

During the morning the passengers watched with interest a wild cloud ceiling form and cover the sky. Things happened suddenly. Out of the clouds the lightning blazed, a furious wind blew up, the rain swept in, and we were in the heart of a shrieking, flashing storm. We took it on the run. A bell jangled from the pilothouse and the boat headed for shore, crashed into the willows and roped itself to them. Dance music began in the long dining saloon. All of which, the captain said, was merely to reassure us.

Why not reassure somebody myself? I needed exercise and there was no chance for a walk on deck. Approaching an obviously scared young woman whom I had not seen before, I made the invitation to the dance a constructive appeal to her superstition.

"It is good luck," I averred, "to dance in a storm."

Her face cleared beautifully. "Let's go," she said, and we did.

The storm and the dance ended together, and the rest of the day was all one could wish in the Abodes of Serenity. In that peaceful passage the leap of a fish from the water was something to be talked about.

There was plenty of music from the shore, and perhaps our violins evoked it—the mournful cry of the killdeer, among the rushes the patter songs of red-winged blackbirds, a torrent of melody from the wild canaries, drumstick ditties from the fly-up-the-creek, on an elm's topmost pinnacle his eminence the cardinal, over a wheat-field the lyrical raptures of a stray bobolink. Sometimes a pair of doves, noiseless save for their whistling flight, swept across the river; these birds seem always on some important mission, as if they bore tidings that would end a war, yet in the matter of domicile they are but shantyfolk. In the drowned meadows the frogs had a market.

Thus acclaimed, or heralded, or maybe merely noted, we went up through the prairie land of Illinois. The trees on the low banks were like green, shadowy prairie herds crowding forward and bending low to slake their thirst in the brimming river. Among the willows were shellbark hickories, butternuts, mockernuts, cottonwoods, pin oaks, white oaks, hackberries, honey locusts, and sweet gums. Back of them were the well-grassed levees, pierced by canals so that surface water could flow out. Corn and some wheat grew in the bottom lands, and beyond them the bluffs shut off the outside world. There were even sand dunes.

We passed clamshell dredges, and small towboats and



barges which carry grain to market for a cent a bushel. What I had taken for colossal concrete silos proved to be grain elevators. Over the whole expanse of river there were only two locks and dams, but of bridges more than a score. One was stationary, the others some sort of drawbridge; at our whistle they either swung one span parallel with our course to permit passage, or raised and lowered the span like a guillotine, or rocked it up and backward like a balance lever, and that is called a bascule. Of houseboats, the most interesting belonged to a party of gangsters—so people said at the town where it was moored—who were hiding out, or perhaps merely rustivating, like the cutthroat in *The Pirates of Penzance*, who loved to hear the merry village chime. Because they had good cars and kept to themselves and looked efficient, they were suspect. From a news item I learned afterward that one of Chicago's illustrious and numerous Public Enemies really was of the party.

Stopping at a river town is always an event because you step out of one world into another, and because people come down to meet you at the threshold of both—and that makes you feel important. You have time at least to visit the public square, which is usually not more than two blocks from the wharfboat, to walk along the Front Street and take a census of eating houses announcing fresh catfish.

Nobody had told me about Beardstown, but when I stopped to get a newspaper in the drugstore there, so that I might learn from the weather report if any more sudden storms were coming, the druggist spoke of a tall man of middle years, with sad eyes and a quizzical-mobile mouth, who also was interested in the signs of the heavens. He bought an almanac at the store in

order to prove to a jury that the moon on a certain August night in 1857 could not have been shining on the face of a man whom he was defending against a murder charge, and that therefore the witness who professed to have identified him by its light was not to be believed. So I went over to the courthouse, now the town hall, and saw the very room, with the original desk and railing, where this man put over perhaps the most dramatic stroke in the history of American criminal trials. Virulent critics even declared that he had a bogus almanac printed to make his point! A tablet outside the building recites that Abraham Lincoln "for the sake of a mother in distress, cleared her son, Duff Armstrong, of the charge of murder in this hall of justice, May 7, 1858."

An hour's ride by boat beyond the town, the Sangamon came in, and we were in the heart of the Lincoln country. At New Salem, another hour eastward over the roads, young Abe clerked in a general store, embarked in his flatboat for New Orleans, idled a good deal, studied law and surveying, qualified for what he called a "mast-fed" lawyer, was postmaster and state legislator at the same time, amassed a worldly estate of a thousand dollars less than nothing—and lived for a while at the Rutledge tavern. There he met, and tradition says, loved Anne Rutledge, shadowy and utterly wistful figure in the American story. Edgar Lee Masters has a beautiful epitaph in his mainly sardonic *Spoon River Anthology* which begins:

I am Anne Rutledge who sleep beneath these weeds,  
Beloved in life of Abraham Lincoln.-

Seated on a bluff at a bend of the Sangamon, and with a dozen families when Lincoln came there in 1831, New

Salem was as large as Chicago; "and both," says Carl Sandburg, "had water transportation, outlets, tributary territory." Of one, "only a phantom hamlet of memories and ghosts" remains.

Thirty miles above the Sangamon, but from the other side, Spoon River comes in. In his *Anthology*, however, Masters gives the name to a town and his volume purports to be a collection of epitaphs taken from its cemetery. Every entombed spirit speaks from the grave with the raw candor of a skull and crossbones. "The mere invention of two hundred and fourteen names," says Amy Lowell, "is a staggering feat"; she calls the book a brutal chronicle, and it is. Yet it is a work of enduring power, with something of the quality and even of the metrical form of the *Greek Anthology*, to the prose translations of which free verse owes a debt.

That Masters no more forgives the land than he does its luckless inhabitants appears in other verses in which he describes Illinois as it was in Lincoln's youth, and speaks of "small, muddy rivers flanked by bottom lands so fat of fertile stuff the grossest weeds thrive thriftier than in Egypt." He sees "repulsive serpents crawl" around their roots, hears the hum of "loathsome insects," and deploras the lot of "agued people" who have no life except hard toil, no pleasures except "violent liquor" and "the orgy" of religious revivals. Yet a poet who had been reared on dried dates and camel's milk in the haggard deserts might have hymned it all in a mood of ecstasy.

The twilight came again, and a shrouded river. In the evening we reached Peoria, erstwhile capital of violent liquor, a beautiful and brilliant city, with broad streets, open-air markets, thronged water front, and illuminated

pleasure craft upon its glimmering lake. The tall buildings that rose beside the water heightened its resemblance to Battery Park at the foot of Manhattan. Peoria is one of a very few towns in the Old West that turn their faces instead of their backs to the river that mothered them.

Morning found us at Peru, head of navigation for steamboats like ours—smaller ones could go clear through by drainage canal to Chicago—and a short ride over the roads brought us to Starved Rock. This bastion of vertical sandstone overlooks the river and the meadows beyond, where once "the Illini shouted and danced under the Autumn moon." In these bottoms were gathered at one time perhaps a score of thousands of Algonquins, members of tribes seeking protection from the Iroquois under the guns of Fort St. Louis, built by the French upon the Rock.

Here was to be the seat of a new empire, dedicated to the fur trade, where savages could traffic with the French. But when troubles between traders and priests led to withdrawal of the troops, the Iroquois struck their red cousins so hard that the Kickapoos did not stop running until they reached the other side of the Mississippi. The grim name of the place was earned a century later when the Ottawas carried on a war of extermination against the Illinois because one of their braves killed Pontiac, fugitive after the Conspiracy. Hemmed in on the Rock, all save eleven died, and no tribe bore their name again.

With broad expanses of water before it, other bluffs flanking it, and narrow swallow-housing canyons running back from them, Starved Rock is just a moment of rugged drama in the eternal pastoral of the river. To

Masters it is a symbol, a sphinx "whose lips unlock life's secret, which is vanishment, defeat." But why take things so bitterly?

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## *XIX. The Father of Waters*

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THE LAST PIECES OF HAND LUGGAGE WERE CARRIED across the gangplank; bells clanged in the engine room; the hoarse whistle sounded a farewell to the wharfboat, the rain-streaked levee and St. Louis generally, and we pulled out into the Mississippi and headed downstream. Thus and thence I had set forth when I went up the Illinois, but now we were going in the other direction. A journey of eleven hundred miles through Dixie lay ahead, and more than a hundred of us were to make it. Every stateroom was taken. It seemed to be a merry company, with enough charming young faces to confute a notion of mine that it was mainly the middle-aged who traveled the inland rivers.

Though we left in the rain of a lowering April twilight, there was promise of better things beyond, with clement skies bending over scenes mellow with memory. We were to follow in the wake of Mark Twain, Mississippi pilot, to pay our respects to somnolent old French towns, to plow waters which the vitriolic Frances Trollope pictured in one of her moods of amenity, to revisit the low country which Dickens lampooned in *Martin Chuzzlewit* and then, by a tranquil river, whence "the

fleets of iron have fled," to track the movement of Civil War gunboats and the march of Yankee and Rebel armies—and so to penetrate the Deep South of Hergeheimer's *Swords and Roses*.

Passengers had scarcely time to install their effects and tidy up in their rooms before the orchestra played the dinner march. I had a cubicle opening on the long dining room and on the main deck, with running water, comfortable berths, a hand ladder and lifebelts—scarcely space to swing a cat in, to be sure, yet large enough. Dinner was served in the main saloon, at tables attached to its walls, which disappeared when dancing began. The first meal was perhaps the best of the trip, though all were quite good, and that on Captain's Night, our last night out, may have been in the same class. On the one occasion we had fried chicken, on the other fried river fish; in serving dinners, as in speaking, it is good strategy to begin and end well.

After dinner Saturday night everybody repaired to the glass-inclosed observation room which occupies the bow of the same deck. The routines of the trip were soon established. A seven-night poker game began there, in which the big captain sometimes joined. "Whenever they want a little white meat they send for me," he explained. A self-contained citizen started a game of solitaire with himself, which proved to be of equal duration. When the waiters had whisked the dinner things away, two nurses on holiday embarked on a game of Russian bank in the rear of the dining room, and it was still going a week later. Bridge tables were set there also. One young woman produced an aluminum pitcher, some bits of colored paper, a bottle of paste and another of shellac, and began transforming the pitcher

into Chinese bric-a-brac, a task too absorbing to permit her to visit the battlefield of Shiloh when the steamboat reached there three days later. The rest of us listened to the little orchestra or danced to its music. It comprised a married couple who played the piano, violin and horn, their nine-year-old son who was equally at home with the xylophone and the traps, and a curly-haired saxophone youth called Izzy—amiable river gypsies, all of them.

By night an observation room on a steamboat is something else, canvas cloths shutting off the outer world so that there shall be no glare to confuse the pilot in his little house on the texas, while he plots the course of the boat by the government lights on either shore and the buoys that mark the channel. I went outside to see what was happening, which was nothing much, for the skies were black with clouds, the river banks were unbroken forest, and a chill wind whipped the rain in my face. However, I took a few turns around the hurricane deck, and thereby established my own routine—which was to walk at least three miles there every day. Thus to go round and round may sound like a treadmill matter, but the scenery changes with every circuit.

When I awoke the next morning, the boat was lying at Cape Girardeau on the Missouri shore, a hundred and fifty miles below St. Louis. We had been traveling at fifteen miles an hour, which rate we maintained all the way downstream; that may seem slow compared to motorcar going, but at every day's end it means three hundred and sixty miles covered, which is more than any save the hardest drivers would care to achieve day after day.

What awakened me was the voices of colored waiters



getting the grapefruit ready on the deck outside my room. Two of them were in debate.

"What!" exclaimed one. "Yo' don' know what a wha'fboat is? Whah' was yo' raised? In Hahlem?"

"Naw," said the other, "in Alabam'."

"Dat 'splains yore ignorance," retorted the sable Missourian.

Lying in bed every morning, I overheard these colloquies, and liked them. The mellow African voices chimed in with the voice of the river. Never did I hear a disorderly word, the nearest approach being a soft "damn," which followed a crash of broken dishes. Good breeding and good nature were the hallmark of these Negro waiters and stewardesses. The tradition of the Southern house servant of antebellum days seemed to be in them. They had a bearing, too; one of the prettiest women aboard was a tawny stewardess with fine, friendly eyes, and long glass pendants in her ears.

Before breakfast I took a walk around Cape Girardeau. It is an old French town with an episode of Spanish rule, and like the French Quarter in New Orleans, with the Spanish influence in some of its buildings. On one of these was a bronze tablet with the inscription, "The Spanish established the first government west of the Mississippi on this site in 1793." The town, which has some sixteen thousand inhabitants, has always been an active shipping center. Washed clean by the rains of the night, bright with the morning sunshine, with all its shade trees in full leaf and its gardens sweet with lilac and gay with tulips and fleur-de-lys, it was an agreeable sight to a storm-tossed traveler from more northern latitudes. This was Sunday, and the stop was made so that passengers could attend early morning service if

they wished; but the only church likely to be open—it had a cross above it—was too far away. So I noted that the Church of the Fundamentalists was to have a service a little later in the Elks' Temple, watched a distant dogfight, and strolled over to the courthouse square, which had army howitzers planted at its corners and a fountain surmounted by a cast-iron statue of a soldier with Civil War mustaches. A Yankee, or a Johnny Reb? You could not be certain.

After breakfast we went on, and I explored our boat, which bore the same name as the town. In addition to coal for its own use, it carried no cargo except peanuts, several tons of them in burlap bags destined for Tennessee, the Peanut State; which is something like carrying coals to Newcastle. The packet was a stern-wheeler over two hundred feet long, and like all Mississippi packets had two landing stages, instead of one, which is the rule on the Ohio. Ropes, anchors, capstans, and chains were scattered on the lower deck; to keep these and other plunder in shipshape, there was an officer bearing the unexpected maritime title of *The Sailorman*.

For the rest of the morning I watched the panorama of the Mississippi from the breezy hurricane deck. If you have read Frances Trollope and Charles Dickens, and never seen it yourself, you would not know the Father of Waters. Mrs. Trollope speaks of its "heavy horror," and its banks as a "region condemned of nature." She even credits a story of a "crocodile" which had invaded a settler's cabin farther downstream and devoured his wife and five young children; Mark Twain denounces the humorous mendacity of Americans who stuff visiting foreigners with such tales and unwittingly give their country an evil name. Of this river Madam

Trollope also alleges, "The air of its shores is mephitic, and it is said that nothing that ever sank beneath its muddy surface was ever know to rise again."

Dickens is still more severe, as was to be expected of the World's Worst Traveler: "An enormous ditch, sometimes two or three miles wide, running liquid mud, six miles an hour; its strong and frothy current choked and obstructed everywhere by huge logs and whole forest trees: now twining themselves together in great rafts, from the interstices of which a sedgy, lazy foam works up; now rolling past like monstrous bodies, their tangled roots showing like matted hair; now glancing singly by like giant leeches; and now writhing round and round in the vortex of some small whirlpool, like wounded snakes. The banks low, the trees dwarfish, the marshes swarming with frogs, the wretched cabins few and far apart, their inmates hollow-cheeked and pale, mud and slime on everything; nothing pleasant in its aspect, but the harmless lightning which flickers every night upon the dark horizon." This may be a masterpiece of odious comparisons, but every simile is a libel.

On a boat very like those which carried the two redoubtable Britons, I traveled a river which is just about as it was then, save that there is less drift in it. Tawny, foam-streaked, vital, with sun sparkles upon it and music hidden in its waters, it was a beautiful and majestic thing. It mirrored the skies, its own shores, and the daily history of the continent. Looking ahead or astern, what you saw was liquid silver; looking on either side, what you saw was an emerald wilderness. Whether you conceive of the Mississippi as a clearinghouse for the surplus waters of mountain and prairie, or as Old Man River, the great, gray, casual vagabond who admits no

responsibilities but just keeps rolling along, it is something that stirs the blood with its intimations of power and mystery.

While a head wind kicked up the whitecaps and brought the gulls screaming about our craft—rivermen say you see them only when winds are high—I watched the Egypt of lower Illinois, Thebes and all, go by on the left, the Missouri shore on the starboard side. Mules and cattle appeared in the infrequent clearings on either bank. At Commerce the levees began their unbroken march to the Gulf; green, often masked with trees and bushes, and set some distance back from the water's edge, you would not notice them unless they were pointed out. Once we passed a log raft, lone survival of fleets that had clogged the channel.

At noon we turned out of the Mississippi and stopped for some hours at Cairo, two hundred miles below St. Louis. Our way thenceforth was to be up the Ohio and the Tennessee.

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## XX. *Where Rivers Meet*

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CAIRO, CAPITAL OF EGYPT, IS SITUATED ON THE RIGHT bank of the Nile, not very far from its mouth. Cairo, capital of the Egypt of Illinois, where we river pilgrims paused on our way to Alabama, is situated on the right bank of the Ohio just at the mouth thereof. They grow cotton, I am told, in both Egypts. There, perhaps, resemblances end. Even their names are pronounced differently, one as if it were a corn syrup, and the other as if it were not. Ever since the Streets of Cairo burst upon a demure republic at the Chicago World's Fair of 1893, and a host of Little Egypts started wriggling in the Coney Islands of the continent, a naughty glamour has invested the African city. The first attraction that its Illinois counterpart offered, as a party of us boatfolk walked up from the landing, was a street-spanning arch where an African had been hanged three years before; so a native declared, perhaps with pride! Why do natives unwittingly give their own towns the worst of it?

Thanks again to Dickens, Cairo got the worst of it at the very start. His account of it in *Martin Chuzzlewit* is perhaps the meanest and most devastating story in all fiction. The trouble with Cairo was that its position at

the junction of America's most significant rivers, the Mississippi and the Ohio, seemed to point to it as the future metropolis of the New World. So Englishmen thought, and tricked themselves, or were tricked by Americans, out of a good many pounds sterling. Dickens took a national revenge when he caricatured the ambitious but unlucky frontier town under the ironic name of Eden.

Thither Martin Chuzzlewit and the cheerful Mark Tapley resorted, only to be smitten with a deadly fever in a God-forsaken hole inhabited by walking ghosts: "The waters of the Deluge might have left it but a week before, so choked with slime and matted growth was the hideous swamp which bore that name." A score of cabins "all rotten and decayed"—that was Eden, and that was Cairo, if you believe Dickens. In their nightmare expedition, the two luckless Britons traveled with Mrs. Hominy, listened to the diatribes of the Hon. Elijah Pogram, and were bullied by Hannibal Chollop, whose business was to start newspapers in the wilderness and sell out—"for the most part closing the bargain by challenging, stabbing, pistolling or gouging the new editor."

Cairo did not become a world mart, although about as many railroads come in there now as at Cincinnati. It lies too low, and until levees were begun there in 1857, floods had a way of turning the peninsula on which it stands into an island. The levees are about even with second-story windows and will need to go higher, for the Mississippi is building up its bed. The river street has the same dilapidated appearance as the streets which front the levees of other cities, only more so. Chief among its evidences of life are hot catfish signs on the windows of restaurants. Above them are the wrought-

iron balconies—made in a Cincinnati yesterday—which embellish the second stories of water-front streets all the way down the Ohio and the Mississippi to New Orleans; I counted eight of these in Cairo, no two patterns alike, all worthy and some beautiful. French and Spanish explorers on the two rivers would have looked for fans and black mantillas upon them.

Back of the water front we found an interesting town of some twelve thousand inhabitants, with wide streets, noble ginkgo trees,—did some sailor bring them from faraway Japan?—snowball bushes in full bloom, and over them the hum of pagan bees that keep no Sabbath. Before the town lay steamboats, dredgeboats, towboats, ferryboats, and barges in a very respectable line. Beyond the boats was drama, the Meeting of the Waters; a broad, restless harbor where the States of Kentucky, Illinois and Missouri come together. Out of their initial letters, you remember, Captain Andy made the name of "Kim," heroine of *Show Boat* who was born aboard the *Cotton Blossom* while it was tossing around at night in a wild storm where the rivers meet. At the Halliday House, they claim that Edna Ferber wrote there the first chapters of her book.

The hotel is one of the sights of the Mississippi valley. A huge caravansary, built before the Civil War but still in good repair, it can be seen for miles upon either river. Its roomy lobby, wide halls, and winding stairways carry the atmosphere of more spacious times. I saw the room where Grant slept when he was in command at Cairo, the dungeons under the hotel where Southern prisoners were confined. On the walls were rude photographs taken at the time, one of Grant and McClelland, looking more liked whiskered Western farmers than men of war; other

photographs showing the deadly little gunboats improvised out of peacetime craft, each with tall, narrow smokestacks and the merest vestige of a texas.

Fort Defiance stood near-by from 1861 to 1865. A bronze tablet on the sea wall recites that "in this harbor Rear Admiral Foote assembled the Western gunboat flotilla, beginning 12 Sept., 1861," and used it brilliantly at Forts Henry and Donelson.

Anybody who visits the old hotel and then ponders this inscription comes away with a thought which could never have found lodgment in the skull of Dickens. Historically, the Cairo of Illinois is a more significant place than the Cairo of Egypt. Without the latter, the world might have been neither better nor worse. Without the things planned and done at the former, the United States might have broken to pieces not later than 1863. John Fiske tells the story. In a continental sense, the strategy of the entire struggle was to turn the Confederate left and cut everything from behind the right held by Lee in Virginia, which seemed all but impregnable against direct attack. Grant began the turning movement and beheld its fulfillment four years later at Appomattox.

He began it at Cairo. Jefferson Davis realized the importance of the junction point between North and South, and sent Leonidas Polk, the bishop-general of Louisiana, against it. But a "thoughtful and silent man" from Galena, a "broken and disappointed man" as men deemed him—the words are Fiske's—struck first. Grant occupied Cairo, at the mouth of the Ohio, and seized Paducah, at the mouth of the Tennessee; a fellow commander seized the mouth of the Cumberland; Kentucky cast in its lot with the Union. There followed Grant's capture of Fort Henry on the Tennessee and Fort Donelson on the



Cumberland, and his bloody victory at Shiloh. As a result of the operations begun at Cairo, the Confederates first line of defense, instead of being on the Ohio, had dropped below the Tennessee boundary into Mississippi.

These things would not have been possible without the gunboat flotilla, assembled in Cairo harbor, which took a hand in reducing the forts, protected Grant's battered lines at Shiloh, rushed the troops that enabled him to turn the tide of battle there, and later stood him in such good stead at Vicksburg. The Men of the Western Waters, as they were called at the outset of the nation's history, wrote a great story in the Civil War—more brilliant, indeed, because freer from major reverses and capital mistakes, than that written anywhere on land.

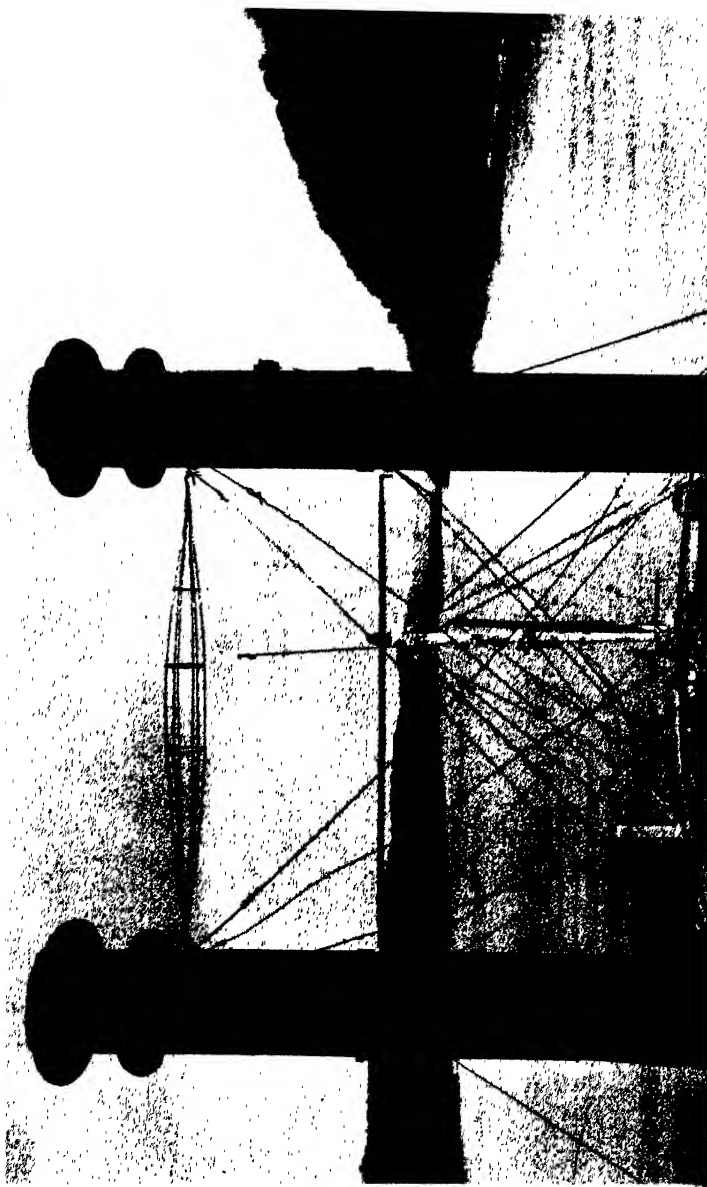
The Mississippi has backed away about a mile from the Ohio since a town arose on the point of land between, and low, sandy tracts overgrown with a tangle of trees lie where the channel was. Rivers in the two valleys shift their mouths with as much facility as valley politicians their convictions.

From a park in Cairo with bronze eagles on its gateposts, I had a last look at the meeting of waters and the broad bight they form as they come together. For the most part, the streams of the Middle West slip so quietly into each other that you can but divine what is happening behind the barrier of willows and rushes which masks their meeting. Grandly and yet distrustfully these two major waterways make their compact of union, the troubled truce of equal powers which have come from afar to the rendezvous and are but half aware of a common destiny.

On Sunday afternoon, embarking again on our steamboat, we started up the Ohio for Paducah, fifty miles

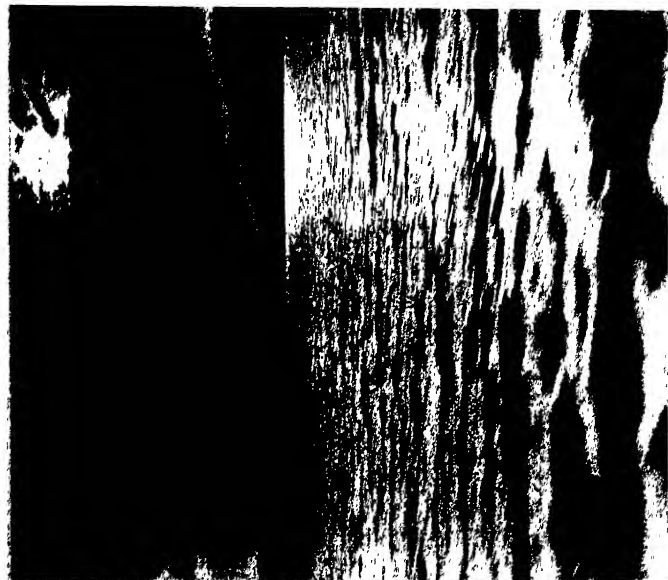
The twin stacks of the river packet dwarf the hills—if you are on the packet.

Paul Briol



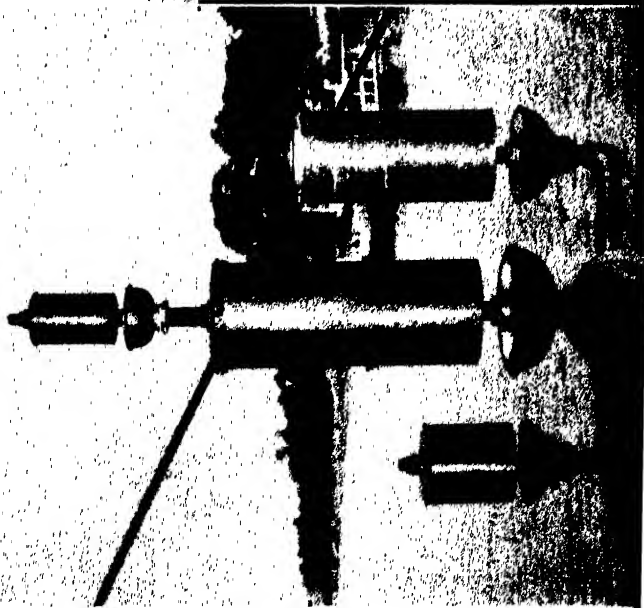


From Lookout Point the eye may follow for miles the Tennessee as it forms a motif of its own in a patchwork fabric of cultivated fields.



The sun, breaking through clouds, paints a path of gold on river.

The voice of the packet. A chime whistle, whose deep-voiced notification that a steamer is arriving will bring a crowd of carefree idlers to any dock on the river.



A roustabout "heaves the lead" and calls the depths in the tried phrases from which Mark Twain took his name.

Tom Greene



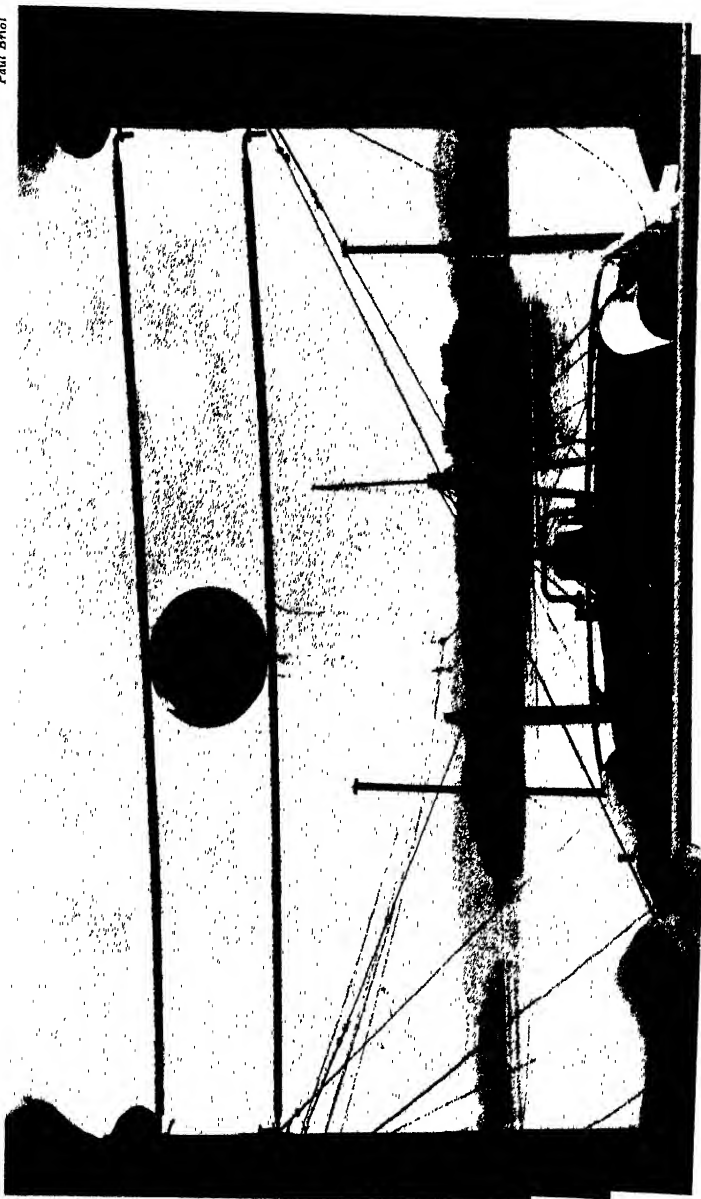


Paul Briol

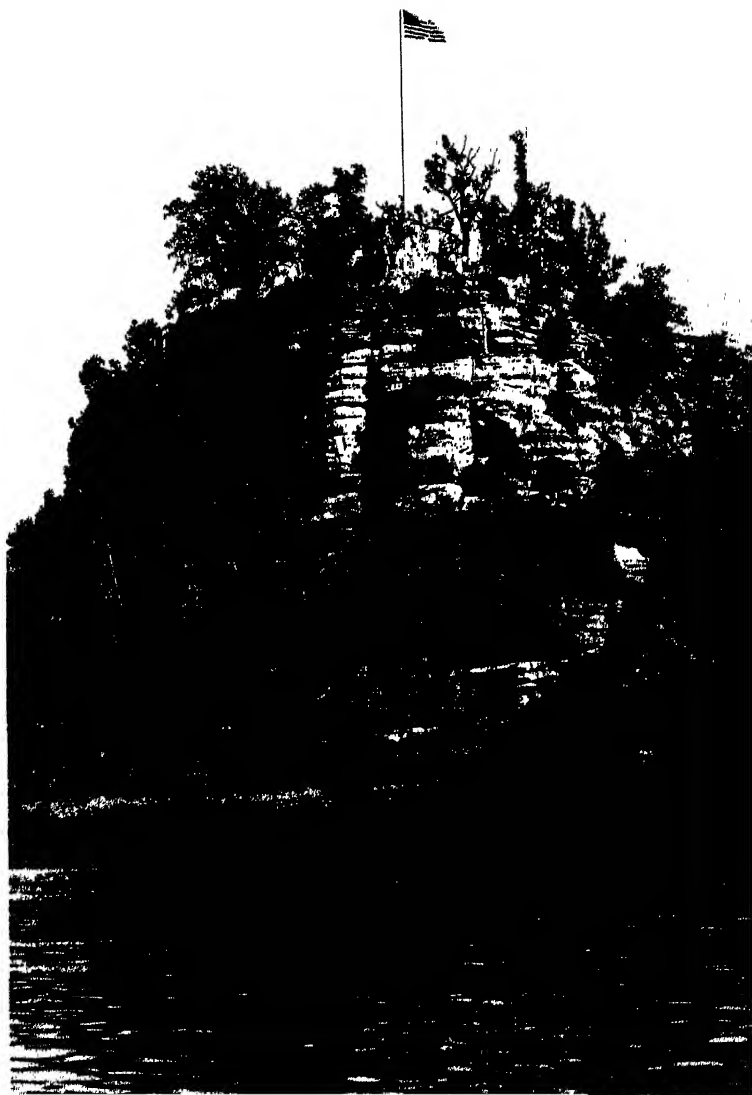
With its 'scapes hissing steam the packet seeks the channel for its run downstream.

Between green wooded islands the packet finds its course.

Paul Briol







Herbert Georg

Once a natural fortress, Starved Rock on the Illinois is now a beauty spot where picknickers gaze at the tranquillity of the river.





*Paul Briol*

The sky, the wooded hills, and the river, combine in peace at the end of the day.

away. For the first time in the voyage, the current was against us. The river was high, with plenty of drift in it, but with the wind astern we made about ten miles an hour. What aided us most was that the Mississippi, which we had just left, was also high. There was what might be called a traffic jam on both rivers, each damming, or least slowing up, the other.

In this lower stretch, the Ohio is about a mile wide, with banks as flat as its companion river's, and with as few evidences of habitation or cultivation. Yet Frances Trollope liked it the moment her steamboat entered it.

On our way upstream we passed the final lock and dam on the Ohio. At Mound City, where steamboats used to be built and are still repaired, we saw some big craft lying up on the ways, among them *French's New Sensation*, a showboat known all over the Mississippi valley. By dark we had reached Paducah, at the mouth of the Tennessee, and lay there long enough for a walk through the lower town. It brought us to a handsome hotel named after Irvin Cobb and containing a vaguely truculent portrait of the humorist by James Montgomery Flagg. The distinguished Kentuckian has an extinguished cigar in his hand; it could not have been a good cigar.

Before bedtime I climbed to the texas and saw the banks of another river sliding by, the half-moon riding the rollers, and the last lights of Paducah disappearing behind a bend. We were going up the Tennessee.

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## *XXI. To the Land of Cotton*

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SOMETIME IN MY SLEEP I MISSED THE LOW THROB OF engines and the small, comfortable noises that a steam-boat makes when in motion. I awoke at length with a sense of utter stillness, a feeling that the world had anchored somewhere in its voyage through space, and that time had ceased. Looking out of my stateroom window, I saw that we were moored among the willows on the right bank of the Tennessee. Faintly from their branches came the song sparrow's song frugalities. From the other side of the boat, one divined rather than saw the river, for the dominion of fog was upon it, and mists walked the woods. They lifted by breakfasttime Monday morning and we went on, having lost five hours in the night. Though it is but seventy miles from the mouth of the river to the Tennessee line, we were still in Kentucky.

During the morning we entered Tennessee, and soon passed the low, green earthworks of Fort Henry, where Grant first demonstrated to an impatient North that it had a real commander.

For two days and nights the packet, with our party aboard, went up the river, crossing Western Kentucky at its narrowest part, and all of Tennessee from north to

south, skirting one corner of Mississippi, and then turning east into Alabama. Though there are those to whom the easy pace we traveled, the nocturnal fogs,—we had a still heavier one Monday night,—and the vast placidities of the countryside would have been an affliction, it was a trip to remember, the peace of the river invading the spirit as sometimes its flood waters invade the brawling creeks and impose a spell of silence upon them.

Bankful and often half a mile wide, its current as clear as big-time water ever gets, the Tennessee swung past our bow as we moved into a warmer clime—at once up the river and down South. Settlements were scarce, and only an occasional rude farmhouse, standing on posts, was seen on the shore, for the inhabitants live back in the hills to escape the annual freshets. In the bottom lands—rivermen call them the “cream jug” of the South—plowing was going on, and cornfields in which crows had some equity had been laid out in the numerous uninhabited islands, the story of which Irvin Cobb has related with felicity in *All Aboard*.

For most of the way, the wilderness, clad in the varied greens of late April, closed us in. Among these everywhere was the dark green of the mistletoe. A border of this strange, intriguing plant—stuff of magic, most haunting of all growths in the folklore of mankind—frames both banks of the river as far up as we went. The dogwood was in bloom, and wild plum trees where mockingbirds sang; and there were miles and miles of the pink and white azaleas which countryfolk call the wild honeysuckle. The women of the boat strove with each other in decorating dinner tables with these forest offerings, and with tulips, lilacs, and iris from the gardens of villages where we stopped; these they begged or

bought or thankfully accepted from pleased daughters of Dixie.

With every turn, fresh river vistas opened, the spectacles of the river showing rather more life than those of the shore. Swallows speeded there, wild ducks spattered along the silver surface like seaplanes before they achieve a take-off, herons and kingfishers patrolled dim reaches signboarded by sycamores. These were places where it seemed as if the river remembered the red man's canoe and regretted all after it.

The War of the States wrote a marginal note at Johnsonville, in the heart of the peanut and cotton country of Tennessee. That is where we unloaded several tons of peanuts which we had brought on from St. Louis. While they went into a shucking factory on the river, I climbed a hill behind the village. There I found earthworks and graves. At this point it is said that Forrest, Confederate cavalry leader, destroyed Federal gunboats and supplies in one of his raids behind the Union lines. I went through the Negro settlement—a cluster of humble cabins along a rude, winding street coursed by a brook where catbirds sang. All the woodyards were out in the street. There a fat hog lay on his snout; the report is mine, the line is Menander's. One of the passengers was Tennessee-born, and when she asked some question of a group of Negro women and they heard the revealing and betraying "you-all" of Dixie, they must have guessed it. Anyway, a strapping young person made application for a job as cook, and proposed that she go back north with us on the boat!

At early breakfast on a Sunday morning in April, 1862, at his headquarters in a charming Southern mansion in the little county-seat town of Savannah in lower Tennessee,

the Union commander, whose recent successes at Forts Donelson and Henry had made him the national hero, heard heavy firing from the direction of Pittsburgh Landing, ten miles upstream. Grant boarded a steamboat at once. When he reached the scene in the forenoon the battle of Shiloh was raging furiously, and was not going right. Our own boat stopped at Savannah for an hour Tuesday morning, so that we could visit the Cherry residence, where Grant had headquarters when the thunder of dubious destinies rolled in upon him.

Approaching it along the bluff, we passed a dilapidated old dwelling with shutters askew as if from shell shock, and with harness hanging and hens on the nest under a high porch floor where homemade soft soap—the first I had seen since boyhood—stood in a smoke-blackened kettle. The Cherry mansion was on the other side of a shady lane, a high stone wall inclosing spacious and beautiful grounds that descended, terrace on terrace, to the Tennessee. Double galleries in the good Southern style ran quite around the house, and a covered way led to the servants' quarters behind. In the back yard was a latticed well house with windlass and bucket under a moss-mantled shingle roof. A purple magnolia tree bloomed near-by. Tall elms where grackles foregathered bent over lawns rich with flowering iris, deep-blue violets, and English ivy. The interior of the mansion is furnished as it was in Grant's time, with a square piano, walnut desks and chairs, a silver water pitcher and goblet on the table. This place was the most Southern thing I had seen outside of Louisiana, lacking little to make it a picture of proud, reposeful yesterdays to which romance has been kind.

An hour later we reached Pittsburgh Landing, and

went ashore to study the battlefield and cemetery of Shiloh, each under the nation's care.

We left Tennessee late Tuesday afternoon, had Mississippi on our right for a little while, and then entered Alabama. About nightfall we reached the lowest of the great rapids of the river, and went round it by means of a lock and canal which raised our boat twenty-five feet—the level of the stream where the rapids begin eight miles above. "Hit's a-raisin'," exclaimed a native woman as the water gushed into the lock chamber at Riverton. It rose so rapidly that our young female passengers, who had stepped onto the bank from the steamboat's hurricane deck, had to scramble back by way of the main deck, two flights below. Slowly, with four men toiling at the hand windlasses, the upper gates of the lock chamber opened, and with a blast of farewell to some scores of Alabama countryfolk who had come to see, the packet moved out into the canal.

For two hours of the night we followed it, creeping carefully along while a searchlight's luminous finger played on the black water, the skiffs by either bank, the towpath, and the wooded peninsula, beyond which, unseen but not unheard, the river pursued a protesting course. A distant clamor of hounds came from the hills. For a while a great white bird, perhaps a gull blinded by our light, flew back and forth across the canal—an uneasy ghost. Dying wood fires glowed where shore and water met. Then the searchlight found, and lingered on, a point of rock ahead; rounding it, we swept back into the Tennessee. On Wednesday morning we awoke with the roar of a greater rapid in our ears.

Muscle Shoals ought to be spelled differently, of course, for it takes its name from the mussel, the un-

hurried pursuit of which, by native fishermen, had entertained us all the way up the Tennessee River. But the pioneers who named it were stronger on muscle than on spelling.

The shoals are the most interesting feature of a very interesting waterway. Largest of the Ohio's affluents, with a total length of about twelve hundred miles, and a drainage basin of nearly forty thousand square miles, the Tennessee is navigable for not much less than seven hundred miles, thanks to the canal through which we passed Tuesday night, and to a second canal near the entrance of which we found ourselves moored on Wednesday morning. You could travel by steamboat all the way from Paducah—if there were boats running—to Chattanooga, and review from the deck the battlefields of Fort Henry, Shiloh, Chickamauga, Lookout Mountain, and Missionary Ridge. Only the Ohio, Mississippi, and Missouri, among American streams, exceed this river in extent of navigable water, and the lordly Hudson is short, indeed, beside it.

At Muscle Shoals the river tries to become a lake, but makes the mistake of running downhill at the same time. It broadens and shallows so that its depth, except in pools, is from a few inches to two or three feet. Meanwhile it drops tremendously—a hundred and thirty-four feet in thirty-seven miles. What it vainly attempts, men have completed. By building a great dam, the government made a lake sixteen miles long by which stand the towns of Florence, Sheffield, and Tuscumbia. Also, it built a power plant and two nitrate plants. This was during and just after the World War. The main object, at least at the start, was to achieve independence of Chile's nitrate rock, in case of war and a blockade of the ocean high-



ways. What I saw was a spectacle of vast power mainly running to waste, and a tremendous capital investment, at that time producing next to nothing.

Source of the power was in mountains where I had been but which I did not really know. Nobody knows the Great Smokies intimately. More than a hundred of their summits are above five thousand feet high; some have not even a name and are not to be adventured alone. Their contribution to geography is that they provide a boundary between North Carolina and Tennessee, the line running along a ridge so narrow in places that he who sleeps upon it—as the story goes—runs risks, by merely turning over in his couch, of falling far into either commonwealth.

On the North Carolina side I had lived for some days with the Eastern Band of Cherokees. They dwell aloof in an ancient land, and rather near the sky. The eagle still flies about their mountain homes. The raven croaks above their pastures—not the common American crow, but a large, black, sardonic fowl with a five-foot spread of wings. Bears, wildcats, and deer are in their thickets. They use oxen, grind their corn in tub mills, kill birds with blowguns, are handy with their fists—Jack Dempsey is of their blood—and play wild, bone-breaking ball games. Tradition says their war cry became the Rebel yell. Civilized, industrious, and literate are the Eastern Band, for they devised their own syllabary, and with it you can learn to read and write Cherokee in ten days. They number about twelve hundred persons.

From the Tennessee side I had ascended a pass of the Smokies and spent a night in a lumber camp, awaking to find a sea of curdled mists below me in which every peak was hidden. On another day I climbed a mountain for more than a vertical mile, passing through at least ten

degrees of latitude and two months of the year. Near the top I entered the precincts of cloudland, sharing the forest with gray, impalpable shapes that hovered close by or trailed in the distance, darkening the ways of the wood.

On the lower levels, along the pink mountain roads, in the brick-colored cornfields and on the front porches of green-embowered, gray-shingled cabins you meet the hill farmers. They live in a land of falling water, and will tell you that a mill is as much a part of a farm as a corncrib. They yodel somewhat, as mountainfolk are apt to do. All read the *Hagerstown Almanac*, and many regulate their lives by the signs of the zodiac. Chiding a neighbor for reading the almanac so diligently, a cove dweller asked him where he expected to go when he died.

"To Hagerstown" was the reply.

I visited Knoxville and Chattanooga also when I climbed the Smokies, and both are mountain gateways as well as river cities. Though by packet I went no farther upstream than Muscle Shoals, it would be slighting a great river's story not to note them here. Knoxville was the capital of Union sentiment in the highland South. At Chattanooga it was the task of the Tennessee to victual the demoralized and half-starved army of Rosecrans after its smashing defeat at Chickamauga late in 1863. The river lifted the siege which Bragg's Confederate columns had enforced from the mountain strongholds about the town. Grant did the rest.

*Picturesque America*, edited by William Cullen Bryant, has a curious account of Chattanooga written a few years after the Civil War. With its dirt streets and barrack-like rows of shops, it might have been a mining town of the Far West. There had been a flood, and steamboats

had appeared in the streets. A rope ferry, with the current as its motive power, crossed the river. Below the town were the Pot and the Suck, two narrow gorges with whirlpool water up which steamboats were warped by a hand windlass on shore. The flatboats which came down to Chattanooga bringing grain and bacon from the northern borders of Tennessee and the southern counties of Virginia had ponderous stern oars nearly a hundred feet long. People in the country rode horseback: "With their sloping sombreros, their gray shawls or army coats, their picturesque saddles, and their general air of graceful dilapidation, they looked like so many brigands."

The Chattanooga that I know is a brilliant and populous city. Here the Tennessee, broad almost as the Ohio at Cincinnati, winds through the plain, and after forming the well-named Moccasin Bend, disappears in a wild gorge between Raccoon and Signal mountains. Missionary Ridge, where Baptists labored among the Cherokees a century and more ago, commands the valley from a height of five hundred feet. Seventeen hundred feet above the river towers the vast vertical pile of Lookout Mountain; from it, in the clear sunlight of a May afternoon, I could see into seven states. With a high sense of theater, Nature set the scene for the most sensational of Grant's victories, and perhaps the most picturesque of all battles. If Vicksburg had not already done so, Chattanooga alone would have redressed the balances of a military reputation which had declined after Shiloh.

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## *XXII. The Battle at a Landing*

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ON THE WAY BACK FROM MUSCLE SHOALS AND DOWN THE Tennessee, our steamboat stopped for a moment at Pittsburgh Landing to take on some fish which had been caught that day for our table. I remember that there were forty-six pounds of catfish, buffalo, and perch at twenty-five cents a pound, and that the captain grumbled over the price.

The slight incident is noted here because it seemed to go with the time and place. The time was the evening hour, the place was the river front of Shiloh National Park. At Shiloh, sixty-nine years before, was fought perhaps the bloodiest battle of the Civil War, the greatest battle which, up to that time, the continent had known; the most controversial conflict, save Waterloo, that history may have recorded. What I saw in the evening light was a green, quiet landing place by a lonely river with a rustic ferry beside it, and a thrush tolling its golden bell somewhere in the thickets. No hillslope cemetery in a forgotten countryside ever looked so peaceful, so secluded, so incredibly far away. The angers of a nation are buried there, along with the bones of its dead, and—I am afraid—with memories of headlong valor in attack and stubborn courage in defense that ought to be proof

against time. Yet there are reasons for forgetfulness. After Shiloh, victory of a sort though it was, the North raged at Grant, whose army had come so near to annihilation. After Shiloh, said George W. Cable, "the South never smiled."

The mood is perpetuated in the Confederate battle monument there. In the center are three allegorical figures in bronze, two of them hooded. They represent Night and Death (so I was told) taking the wreath from the brow of Victory—Night and Death which came too soon, one to the charging Southerners, the other to their commander, the stately Sidney Johnston, last of the cavaliers. In low relief in stone to left and right of the group are the heads of marching lads, lifted and joyous on one side, grief-stricken upon the other. It is a moving memorial. Still more personal in its sentiment is the monument to the dead of the Crescent City regiment. The sons of the wealthy New Orleans Creoles thronged its ranks, proud to follow Beauregard, gifted Creole commander; the regiment dashed itself to pieces in incessant assault on the lines of stubborn, straight-shooting farm boys who followed Sherman and Prentiss. After the war the fathers of the Louisiana lads erected the monument.

With a curious blend of emotions—let us say the shadows of emotions, for these were "old, unhappy things"—I went over the battlefield. Grief I seemed to feel, or the phantom of grief, and anger, or its faraway echo: grief at the remembrance of a fratricidal strife, anger that it was permitted to be. "Politics," said Henry Adams, "had always been the systematic organization of hatreds."

Such were my reflections when we stopped on our way

up the river and inspected the battlefield. My driver was a smart Southern woman, a World War widow, who keeps a summer hotel near-by, and who had a grandfather and three great-uncles on the the Confederate side at Shiloh, and three great-uncles on the Union side. "That makes me pretty neutral," she said, "except when somebody says that Grant was drunk during the battle. Then I get mad. He wasn't"—and that is correct history.

We saw the things that you read about in the battle tales: Peach Orchard where the fighting was fiercest; Bloody Pond where the wounded of both armies slaked their thirst in a truce of pain; the Hornet's Nest with its sunken road—was there not a sunken road at Waterloo?—which poured death upon the charging Confederates while their bullets sang harmlessly over it; the white oak under which Johnston received a mortal wound; the trenches studded with cannonballs where sleep in serried ranks the nameless Southern dead; the state monuments, Shiloh church, a bullet-riddled cabin, a shell-splintered tree still in leaf, the various positions of the Union forces as step by step they were driven back through the woods.

We saw also the National Cemetery, which is part of the thirty-six-hundred-acre reservation. Nearly thirty-seven hundred Union dead are buried there. Somehow the plan to include Confederate interments came to naught, and yet the last word, the solemn requiem carved line by line on bronze tablets that stand along green aisles in that place of memory, is from a Confederate pen. "On Fame's eternal camping ground their silent tents are spread"—you know the rest. "The Bivouac of the Dead" was written by Theodore O'Hara, Kentuckian, colonel on Johnston's staff.

The cemetery is on a bluff above the river. It is a beautiful place.

I have read various accounts of the battle. As late as August, 1928, Hergesheimer retold it in a magazine as part of a biographical sketch of Johnston, whom he called "the Lonely Star." Lloyd Lewis had a capital account in another magazine. Grant's account and Sherman's and Rhodes's and John Fiske's and Gamaliel Bradford's and Nicolay and Hay's are all illuminating. But the tersest, and by no means the worst, is in verse, for verse is a sort of shorthand. Stephen Vincent Benét writes it in *John Brown's Body*. In one sentence about Johnston, Benét sketches unforgettably a great battle, a great career: "He caught Grant napping in some strange flaw of skill which happened once and did not happen again."

Benét's picture of the scene on the eve of Shiloh, which begins "A wide western river, a little lost landing," is worth reading as perhaps the only instance of a battle map made over into a poem. The Federal Army of the Tennessee, thirty-three thousand strong, lay in a triangle four miles each way, its base on the river, the other sides formed by bordering creeks. Buell was coming up the river to reinforce it with the Army of the Ohio, twenty-five thousand strong. Johnston and Beauregard had forty-one thousand Confederate troops and a plan to strike the one army before the other could reinforce.

Grant was at Pittsburgh Landing, waiting for Buell to come in from Nashville, and then their united forces were to march against Johnston and Beauregard at Corinth, an important railroad center across the Mississippi line twenty miles away. It never occurred to him that instead of awaiting attack behind intrenchments the

Confederates would march to meet him. So he did not intrench, although a single night's work, Sherman says, would have made his position impregnable. Like everybody else, he was still new to the game of war. Also, he was quite unused to being attacked. He was always going forward, always thinking of what he would do to the enemy, rather than what the enemy might do to him. It was a good fault, and because of it the Union cause had been prospering in the West, while the eminent Union strategists in the East were merely marking time; but for once in his career it came near being his undoing.

There are few things stranger in military history than the position of the two armies on the eve of the battle, and the state of mind of their commanders. The Confederate strategy was to crush Grant before Buell joined him, and this was to be a surprise attack; but the butter-nut warriors came up noisily to within two miles of the Federal pickets, the young Southern lads trying out their muskets and taking potshots at owls and squirrels along the way. Nothing was stirring in the Union camp. Beauregard, whose restless mind always credited the enemy with information and strategy equal to his own, grew suspicious. Evidently Grant was going to ambush his army! Yet on that very day Grant had telegraphed Halleck, department commander, that the enemy was still at Corinth. With forty-one thousand men in butter-nut brown slipping through the woods, he went back that night to his headquarters at Savannah, ten miles down the river.

At dawn on Sunday, April 6, 1862, came the attack. It has often been said that it found the Union troops in their beds. The best statement is that of Prentiss, made long afterward: "We were not surprised, but we were



not prepared." The enemy came on in three waves, led by Hardee, by Bragg, and by Bishop Polk and John C. Breckinridge. Their assault fell on the Union right under Sherman, the Union center under Prentiss, the Union left under Stuart. Their plan of battle was to turn the Union left, which rested on the river, so that no reinforcements could reach it by river, and to pen the entire army in the corner formed by the river and a swollen creek, whence it could scarcely have escaped. It was good strategy but faultily executed, for the brunt of the Southern attack fell on the right, and on the center with its murderous Hornet's Nest. This latter Prentiss defended with such valor that although he was captured with two thousand men in the late afternoon and sent to a Southern prison, the *Standard Dictionary* contains the following definition: "Shiloh, a battlefield in Tennessee where Grant and Prentiss defeated Beauregard and A. S. Johnston!"

By the end of the day the Union army had been driven back two miles; its regiments were terribly scrambled, and under the bluffs at the Landing cowered eight thousand fugitives, all the fight knocked out of them. But the line still held. Lew Wallace, with seven thousand veteran troops, came up on the Union right at dark; from his outpost at Crump's Landing he had been marching all afternoon, and going the wrong road! On the Union left, the first division of Buell's army took position in the gathering shadows. An improvised Union battery, posted on a ridge, and two gunboats standing by, enfiladed the Confederate positions. Though Bragg pleaded for one more charge, Beauregard called off the attack for the day. The next morning Grant and Buell made a joint attack, and after a vigorous resistance Beauregard withdrew his

army in good order to Corinth. The losses were about ten thousand men killed and wounded on each side.

Who won and who lost? Halleck, in his report to Washington, says that Sherman saved the day. Grant, in his memoirs, almost says as much. Sherman makes no claim at all for himself, and yet the fiery, resourceful, redheaded general whom the politicians had been calling "crazy" was a flame of war. Buell prided himself on saving Grant from annihilation. Grant, who reached the scene after the battle had been raging three hours, did nothing distinguished the first day, but the "dark pool of desperation" which his biographer Woodward discerned under his character must have been stirred to its depths. His real quality emerged at the day's end, when he announced, "We shall attack tomorrow." Here was language which the Union high command in the East could not even understand.

Johnston and Beauregard staked all on engaging Grant before Buell's army came up. It has been said that if Johnston had not been killed, the South might have won at Shiloh and in the war. Beauregard has been censured for not launching that final charge, but Northern historians are agreed that he showed generalship and military skill throughout. Grant, who is of that opinion, thinks that Johnston betrayed evidences of vacillation. Others have suggested that the latter, smarting under the Fort Donelson reverse, and the rebukes of the Confederate government, went into action more as a volunteer soldier determined to win or die than as commander in chief.

The remarkable thing about the battle is that it was fought by raw, almost untrained troops, most of whom had never heard a shot fired in anger and were new to

the arms they handled. When they collided, thousands on both sides scampered away. The remainder showed a gallantry and stubborn courage under difficulties such as have never been surpassed, or perhaps equaled, in the American story. While the generals and their partisans quarreled over the credit, poetic justice would require that the battlefield at Shiloh should be dominated by the statues of two lads without shoulder straps, Americans both, though in different uniforms. There credit belongs.

Shiloh has a special interest for me because my father fought there as a young officer in Buell's army, and because I have had contacts of a sort with some of its figures. Sherman I heard as a lad, and I remember the deep, musical voice which he shared with his younger brother John. Lew Wallace, author of *Ben Hur*, I heard defend his choice of roads to the battlefield. In the absence of explicit instructions, he said, it was the soldier's duty to "march toward the sound of the enemy's guns."

As a lad again, at the French Opera House in New Orleans, I saw a handsome, martial figure with gray mustache and imperial. It was Beauregard, captor of Fort Sumter, hero of Bull Run, commander at Shiloh, possessor of the Napoleonic complex common to short, handsome men, vain, of course, infinitely imaginative, fertile in schemes and stratagems, popular in the South even beyond Lee himself, always in trouble with Jefferson Davis; Beauregard, of the "booty and beauty" proclamation, Beauregard at whose request the churches gladly gave up their bells for cannon—something of a poseur, and yet a skillful and gallant officer and the most loyal of soldiers.

On the Green River a pilot had told me his own memories of Buell—the Blücher of another Waterloo—and

what a challenging figure he made astride a horse at reunions of his command at Shiloh. Walking inland once from the Ohio to the rambling little Kentucky town of Washington, I found there a pretty but dilapidated frame house with green shutters and shingled roof standing in a garden. A Negro mammy, who said she owned the house, greeted me.

It was the birthplace of Albert Sidney Johnston, who may, or may not, have been the Hope of the South.

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### *XXIII. It Gives and It Takes Away*

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I HAD INTENDED TO GET OFF AT PADUCAH WHEN WE came down the Tennessee and return home by rail but I was loath to have the journey end. So I remained aboard, descended the Ohio, turned to the right, and ascended the Mississippi to St. Louis, completing the inland tour of eleven hundred miles.

I should like to have turned to the left at Cairo, and fared south on the Father of Waters and on to New Orleans, whose levees were thronged with bellowing, gaudy steamboats when first I saw them as a boy. But that was not to be. Going back, there was just as much to see as before, since we passed in the daytime shores that had stolen by unseen in the dark. And I found I could divine the channel, know by the laboring of the engines and the panting of the steampipes when we were in shallow water, guess its depth under our paddle wheels. This was lore imparted by the retired pilots of the party. One of them sat at my table. Although he had guided steamboats up the Mississippi to St. Paul for more than a generation, he seldom waited for the end of the meal. He wanted to see what was doing upon the water.

Among devotees of the river was the widow of a

river captain. Another was a handsome woman who runs a pleasure beach on the Illinois. A third was an Indiana judge, who looked like a field marshal, played the violin with the agility of a mountain fiddler, and could hold his own in a romping country dance—fourscore, perhaps, but boyhearted. He spoke of a time when there was a steamboat war on the Ohio and it was cheaper to sleep and eat and ride back and forth on a packet than it was to live in boarding houses in the towns along the river.

At my table sat a Cincinnati whose passion for the packets may have arisen from the fact that his company made all the searchlights used upon them. Whenever the Mardi Gras boat left the levee at the foot of Broadway he was there as either passenger or wistful onlooker. On one of his trips to Pittsburgh he met an enthusiast from the Ohio town of Ashtabula who read Mark Twain and Edna Ferber, and then took train for St. Louis, expecting to find there a packet which would carry him up the Ohio to the head of navigation. He did get a boat from Louisville to Cincinnati, and another thence. All the days and most of the nights—there was a full moon—he spent on the upper deck; so was a dream of one man realized.

I quite enjoyed one of our pilots who runs a fish market in Peoria in the winter and who discoursed on the superiority of freshwater fish over those caught in the ocean. He said the way to bring out the flavor was to cook them quick and hot and serve them crisp. For some years he had a fish and oyster boat on the river Brazos in Texas. He told of waters where hyacinths grew so tall that oarsmen had to stand at their tasks in order to see over them. There were more boats now, he said, on the bayous of Western Louisiana than on the Mississippi itself. Once

he had been lost for two days among the waterways of the Acadians. Nobody whom his boat met could speak anything but French; in that territory a big boat is called a batteau and a small boat a pierrot, and in all the Southwest the buzzard is known as the Texas canary.

Some of the roustabouts knew, as those on the Ohio seemed not to know, parts of the haunting saga of John Henry, which is chanted along wharves of the lower Mississippi. Though a demigod, he was but a Negro section hand, "wid a chest lak a rain-barrel" as Onah Spencer records. Fearing the dawn of technological employment, he challenged the Machine Age when it appeared "in de Virgingia mount'ins" in the form of a steam hammer which could drive more steel than ten men. There was an epic contest in a railroad tunnel, and the black man won. "Now one more lick 'fore quittin' time," he said, and with the last blow fell dead.

We had high water all the way back. The Tennessee, twenty feet above its summer levels, swept along at a rate that brought us to stopping places hours ahead of time. In the lower Ohio the descending flood had invaded the creeks that enter it. On the driftwood I saw a convocation of snowy cranes, a sort of silent, sinless Senate; they are rare birds in these waters, appearing the year before our journey for perhaps the first time in a generation. When we reached the Mississippi we sought slack water, veering from headland to headland to avoid the full power of the current as we moved upstream.

There I saw loons diving and coming up at a distance. Just as gull gatherings are a sign of wind, the captain confided, so loons are the token of wet weather; even as he spoke, a sudden shower dashed raindrops in our faces. Pelicans he saw at intervals of a year or so, and

always in considerable flocks. In rough weather gulls follow steamboats as crows follow a plow, and I studied them at close range. Bobbin-bodied, clipper-winged, poker-faced and spoon-footed is the gull, and in its throat is a primal music, its discords accordant with heaving water.

Early travelers had some sharp things to say about the grim women and greedy men on riverboats in this part of the world. Things must have changed. Our packet carried a congenial collection of men and women from all parts of the Middle West. Thrown on their own resources, passengers revived the artless parlor amusements of other decades. Every night there was chorus singing, and recitations and improvised dramatic sketches; the law of the journey was that if you were asked to perform, you did.

A striking figure in our party was a native Hawaiian girl who was traveling with an American relative and whom we called Kula, a lass with joyous disposition, dark, glowing countenance, and expressive eyes. Once when we gathered wild plum blossoms she wove them into a lei and hung it about her neck. She was a graceful dance partner, and since Kula seemed to rhyme with hula, we expected her to make the rhyme a fact, but she had promised her father that she would not. On Captain's Night she came out not as a native dancer but in witch garb. "I am a Hawaiian kahuna," she declared, and proceeded to make an American cent disappear and reappear on a table.

"I learned that in Chicago," she admitted afterward.

At Fort Massac in the town of Metropolis on the lower Ohio where we stopped for an hour, we took up the trail of George Rogers Clark and the story of French



settlements in the Mississippi valley. The French had built the fort to control the mouth of the river, and trails ran thence to Kaskaskia; on these he set forth with a hundred and seventy backwoodsmen to the conquest of the Northwest.

We found a green earthwork, with cannon at its corners, within a concrete retaining wall on the river bluff, and an Illinois state park of a hundred acres behind it. A monument to Clark stands there.

We went by—or rather over—Kaskaskia. Although its story is more striking and only less significant than that of Vincennes, and although it was once the capital of Illinois Territory, it is no longer on the map, and no longer on earth. The fate of the town was as strange a thing as that of the fabled city of Is, the sunken capital whose bells the Breton fishermen say they hear when wind and tide move shoreward together.

It stood on the point of land where the Kaskaskia River joined the Mississippi on the Illinois side, sixty miles below St. Louis. A mission was established there in 1700, and by 1717 it was a settlement of consequence, with windmills, and corn mills turned by horses. When Clark suddenly appeared there in 1778 it was very like any of the French towns of modern Quebec. It had long, narrow streets with whitewashed houses a story or a story-and-a-half high, made of crosstimbers and clay, with verandas running around them. Back of the dwellings were apple, peach, and pear orchards, and beyond these the strips of land which townsmen farmed. In winter the men wore the coarse blanket capote drawn over shirt and long vest. The women wore gay kerchiefs, short jackets, and petticoats; they went barefoot in summer, and in cold weather wore moccasins or clog shoes. Priests,

painted savages, and *coureurs de bois* mingled in the streets.

Clark and his lean Virginians took the outpost un-awares at night, seizing the fort and making the French militia prisoners in their own homes. When he told the trembling villagers the next day that their lives and liberties were secure and that the French king, dispossessed by the British fifteen years before, had espoused the American cause, joyously they cast their fortunes in with the Long Knives. They helped him to seize Cahokia—now but a name on the Illinois shore opposite St. Louis—and their native sense of drama was gratified when they heard him answering the tall talks of visiting Indian delegations there with language of equal exuberance and with a pride and port beyond the savage wont; they joined him also in his sensational recapture of Vincennes.

At Kaskaskia the Illinois territorial legislature met in 1812. There Lafayette came in 1825, and there Lincoln attended court. At one time the town had some three thousand inhabitants. But the Mississippi is a masterful, a jealous, and an acquisitive river, and for a space the little Kaskaskia paralleled its course, with nothing between except the narrow peninsula at the end of which the town stood. The greater stream stole the last seven miles of the smaller, wiping out the peninsula and the town upon it. We passed the new island which it made on the other shore, where wheat is still raised and range cattle fattened, and to which the Kaskaskians carried the church bell given them by Louis XIV. At its head I saw a narrow inlet choked with willows, all that remained of the old channel of the Father of Waters. In the floods of 1927 a packet went through it. Here, and here alone, both

shores of the middle Mississippi are in the same state.

The theft of the waterway covers the years between 1881 and 1898. One of the veterans aboard casually remarked that he used to pilot a packet up the ravished river, trade at the vanished town, and from barns far above bring down corn for St. Louis, wheat for New Orleans. He could not understand my excitement over his narrative.

That is routine for the Father of Waters. Mark Twain thinks that in few places is its bed where white men saw it first. It gives and it takes away, and all deeds conveying property on its banks specify so many acres of land, "more or less." Great robber and great restorer, the river is Jovian alike in its rapacities and its benignities.

The government itself, by building dikes which form sand bars and then terra firma, shifts it from side to side, creating slack water where boats can make good headway upstream, and mitigating the destructive rush of waters that a straightaway course would entail.

Through a land of uncertain soils and encroaching and receding waters our course was laid. We passed Potato Bend where a group of German farmers had two hundred acres of good potato land a generation ago; only seven acres are left. Another and heavily mortgaged farm sank completely out of sight, nothing remaining but the mortgage. I saw a deserted dwelling well back from the shore; three years before, our boat had stopped right in front of it, swung a landing stage to the porch, and taken off the household gods. The captain had a story of a man who used the steamboat in high water for what might be called intramural farming; after cultivating one cornfield, he put his two work mules on the packet and took them off again at another patch of corn a quarter

of a mile below, thereby circumventing a wet-weather slough.

Here and there clusters of dwellings were outlined against the distant bluffs with lazy water before them, and broad, willow-guarded sand bars between this water and the river. These were aforetime shore hamlets where the big boats stopped, and small boats still may serve them. In such backwaters live one tribe of the world-wide People of the Fringe—aquatic gypsies, meditative fishermen, shantyboat families, an occasional fugitive; folk that take life easily, perhaps carelessly, in the slumbrous suburbs of the river.

Far inland over the trees we saw the spires of a town where steamboats used to stop. To reach the old river port of Ste. Genevieve, now high and dry behind the willows, we stopped at a landing and went back two miles in cars. We found a romantic French town of three thousand inhabitants, with a Catholic church of almost cathedral size and sightliness—a Gothic nave and transepts, a deep chancel, and stained-glass windows and marble statues brought from Europe. The priest called it “a nest of bells” and they chimed briefly and beautifully as I crossed the threshold. One of the memorial tablets was to “François La Valle, commandant of the Post of Ste. Genevieve, 1770–1783.” In the town were charming old houses of whitewashed stucco, a high-walled convent school, a procession of girls wearing veils for the May Devotions; there were goats along the road.

The shores grew bolder as we voyaged northward. Grand Tower on the Illinois side is a high, rocky island with swift currents before it. On the Missouri side above Ste. Genevieve, there appeared a line of lofty bluffs which had the aspect of cyclopean masonry, and in which could

be discerned the contours of bastions, monumental thresholds, fireplaces, even wine cellars; the trees on the skyline above looked small and far away. One of the pilots averred that these were the Ozarks, which I had thought were farther west. Beside them we rode into the sunset amid moments of such beauty as hushed the babble of the decks, leaving only the melancholy charm which attends music upon water.

With a masked ball aboard our steamboat we celebrated Captain's Night and the closing hours of an inland voyage. The women dug up gay garments from somewhere, or wore their husbands' clothes, or paraded in pajamas. A pretty young matron blacked up, borrowed a waiter's jacket, cocked a diminutive cap on her head, and was a personable Topsy. The prize went to a short woman with a suit of men's clothes, a false face, and a pillow strategically placed, who caricatured the big captain.

After the grand march and the dancing, I went up on the hurricane deck and watched the long rollers astern with the full moon upon them—no mere glitter, but something that was at once fire and satin.

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## Bibliographical Notes

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HE WHO WOULD BRING HOME THE WEALTH OF THE INDIES MUST carry the wealth of the Indies with him. So runs a Spanish proverb. Samuel Johnson interprets it as meaning that "in travel a man must carry knowledge with him if he would bring home knowledge." If the presence of a list of references at the end of a volume of personal narrative needs defense, Johnson seems to have made it.

Zadok Cramer's *Navigator*, annually published in Pittsburgh until the packets came, was invaluable to emigrants descending the Ohio and has been invaluable in preparation of the present work. It has a modern successor in the government publication *The Ohio River*, by Robert Ralston Jones. The files of the *Waterways Journal* of St. Louis are a rich source of material. Other highly useful works were Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*, David Zeisberger's *History of the North American Indians*, Daniel Drake's *Pioneer Life in Kentucky*, Timothy Flint's *Recollections and History and Geography of the Mississippi Valley*, Henry Howe's *Historical Collections of Ohio*, the *History of Kentucky* by Lewis Collins, Theodore Roosevelt's *Winning of the West*, Archer Butler Hulbert's *Historic Highways of America*, Ethel Leahy's *Who's Who on the Ohio River*, Douglas Anderson's "Old Times on the Upper Cumberland" and the provocative reports of early British travelers like William Faux, Frances Trollope, and Charles Dickens.

Recourse has been had also to the files of Cincinnati and of Kentucky mountain newspapers, to annual reports of the United States Army Board of Engineers, to the publications of the Geo-

logical Surveys of Ohio and Kentucky, of the Ohio Archaeological and Historical Society, and of the Indiana Historical Commission. The thirty-two volumes of *Early Western Travels*, edited by Reuben Gold Thwaites, reprint the narratives of some thirty key travelers into and beyond the area of this book. In the monthly and quarterly publications of the Ohio Archaeological and Historical Society (forty-four volumes) are numerous studies of mound builders, Indians, rivers, pioneer settlements. Only a few of these and of the Thwaites collection, chiefly those noted in the text, are listed among other references below.

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